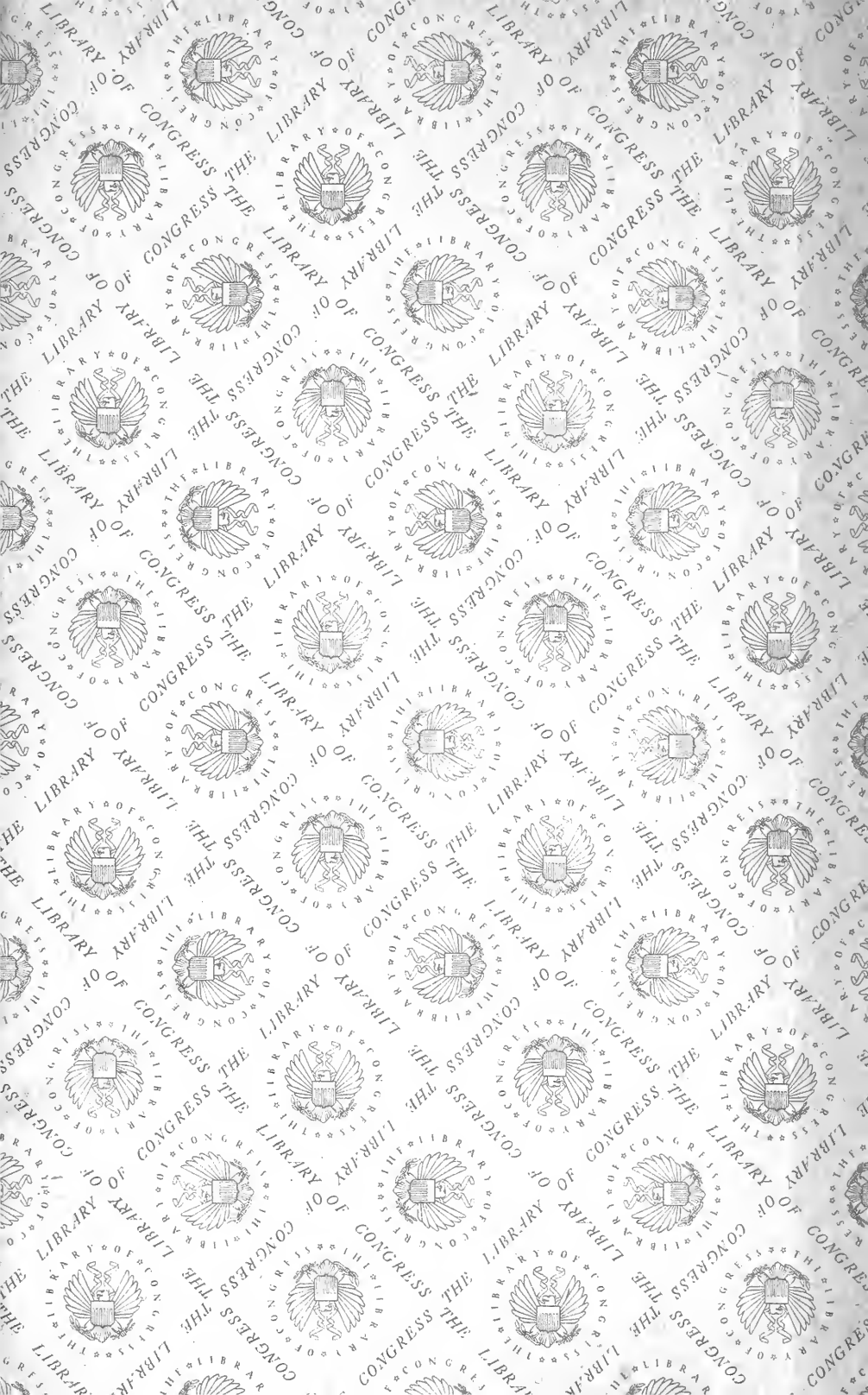
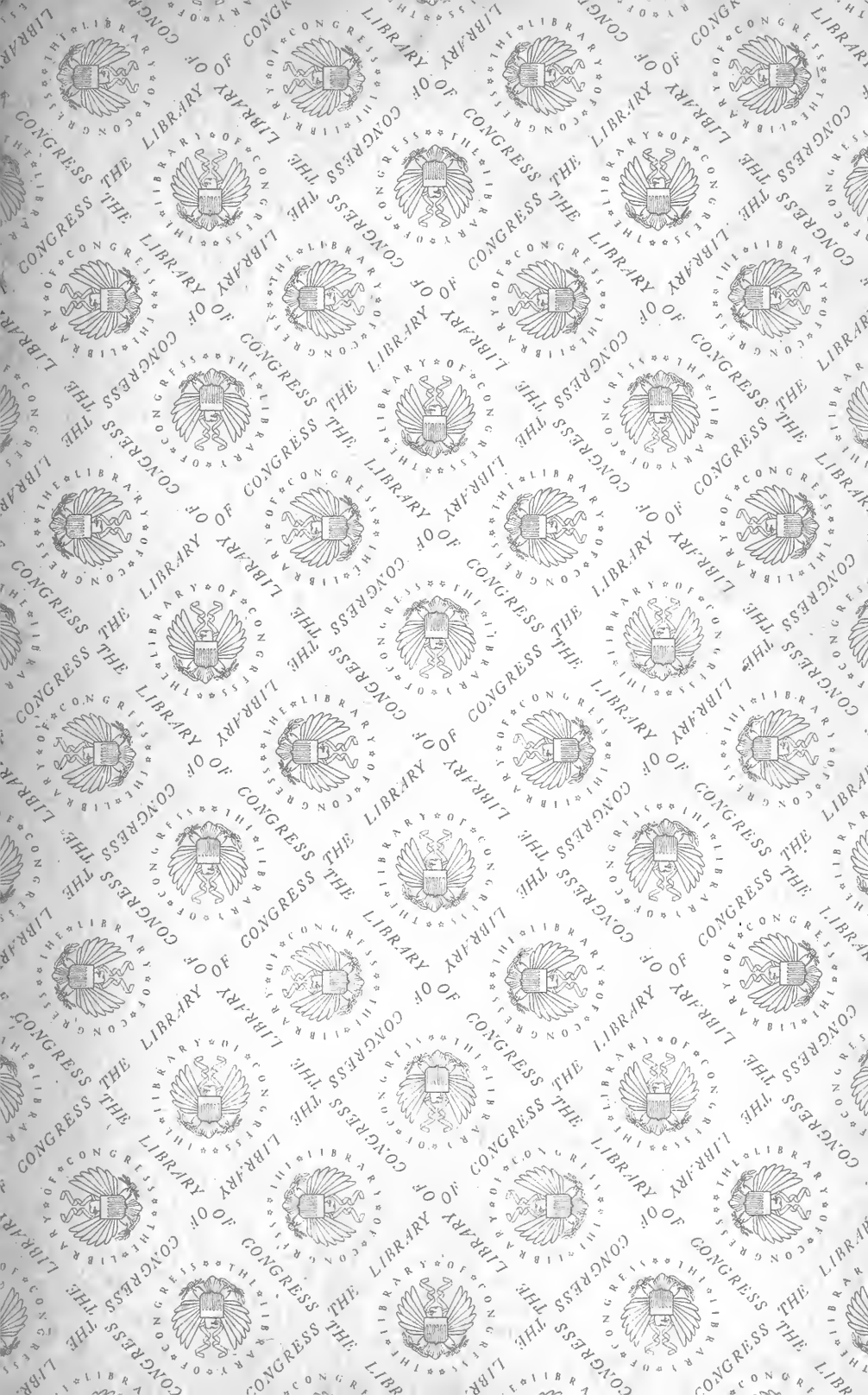


# The Strategy of The Great War

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William L. McPherson









# The Strategy of The Great War

A Study of its Campaigns and Battles in their  
Relation to Allied and German  
Military Policy

By

William L. McPherson

Author of "A Short History of the Great War"



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To  
MY WIFE



## PREFACE

THE first six chapters of this volume appeared in the Sunday issues of the New York *Tribune* in January and February, 1919. Parts of four other chapters appeared in later Sunday issues of the same newspaper. The author's thanks are due to Mr. Ogden Reid, editor-in-chief of the *Tribune*, for permission to reprint them in book form.

In these studies the author has elaborated the theories outlined in his daily "Military Comment" in the *Tribune* from April 15, 1918, until the signing of the armistice.

This war differed from all other wars. It was fought on a scale transcending all experience. Its development could not be foreseen by the general staffs which were charged with conducting it. Many new and disturbing factors entered into it. The strategy on both sides was confused and empirical. Novel conditions in the field also revolutionized tactics. The old balance between the offensive and the defensive was

deranged. It had to travel slowly around a circle to re-establish itself. The war, by its very immensity, overrode the strategists. It worked out its own strategy and its own tactics.

It is the purpose of this volume to interpret the influences which controlled the military policy of the two belligerent groups, and to present a clear view of the curious evolution of tactics which led from open warfare through the deadlock of rigid positional fighting around again to semi-open and then to practically open warfare. To the military student this phase is of absorbing interest.

What may be called the grand strategy of the war was largely affected by political as well as by purely military considerations. Germany's fatal blunder—that of forcing the United States into the contest—is traceable to political misjudgments of long standing. Politics, diplomacy, strategy, and the moral deficiencies of the German character all had their rôles in the gigantic drama entitled “World Power or Downfall.” Taking these all into account it is the writer's object to show, in a simple and non-technical way, why Germany lost a war which she might have won if she had conducted it with a keener sense of her own geographical and military limitations.

The first six chapters deal with the general principles

underlying German and Allied strategy. The others analyze the battles and campaigns in which the working out of these principles is illustrated.

The details of most of the main operations of the war have yet to be filled in. There are few critical works available. Perhaps the most satisfactory books of this sort produced up to date are volumes ii and iii of General Palat's *La Grande Guerre sur le Front Occidental*—studies of Joffre's Alsace, Lorraine, and Belgian offensives of 1914.

For the German interpretation of German strategy Lieutenant-General Baron Freytag-Loringhoven, Deputy Chief of the German General Staff, is the most useful source. He has been drawn on freely in this volume because when he wrote his two books—*Deductions from the World War* and *A Nation Trained in Arms or a Militia?*—he thought that Germany was going to win, and was willing to speak somewhat frankly and indulgently of the causes which, in his opinion, had retarded victory. The elaborate series of descriptions of battles and campaigns issued under the patronage of the German General Staff—*Kriegsberichte aus dem Grossen Hauptquartier*—shows only here and there a glimmer of critical frankness.

General Basil Gourko's book, *War and Revolution in Russia*, is an excellent first-hand authority on the

conditions on the Russian front. It is candid and discriminating. *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* contains valuable first-hand information about the Dardenelles campaign. Good American books on the war are scarce. The author has depended for facts to some extent on *The International Cyclopedia* annuals for 1914, 1915, 1916, and 1917, and on the first two volumes of Frank H. Simonds's *A History of the World War*.

Other sources used were Louis Madelin's *The Victory of the Marne*, George F. Schreiner's *From Berlin to Bagdad*, Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Azan's *The Warfare of Today*, Professor Douglas W. Johnson's *Topography and Strategy in the War*, Señor E. Diaz-Retg's *The Attack on Verdun*, and Field Marshal Haig's admirable reports on British operations in France from 1916 to 1918.

In a volume, to be published immediately, entitled *A Short History of the Great War*, I shall outline more in detail the events and campaigns which have been touched on in this book for the purpose of illustrating the strategical problem.

WILLIAM L. MCPHERSON.

NEW YORK, May 1, 1919.



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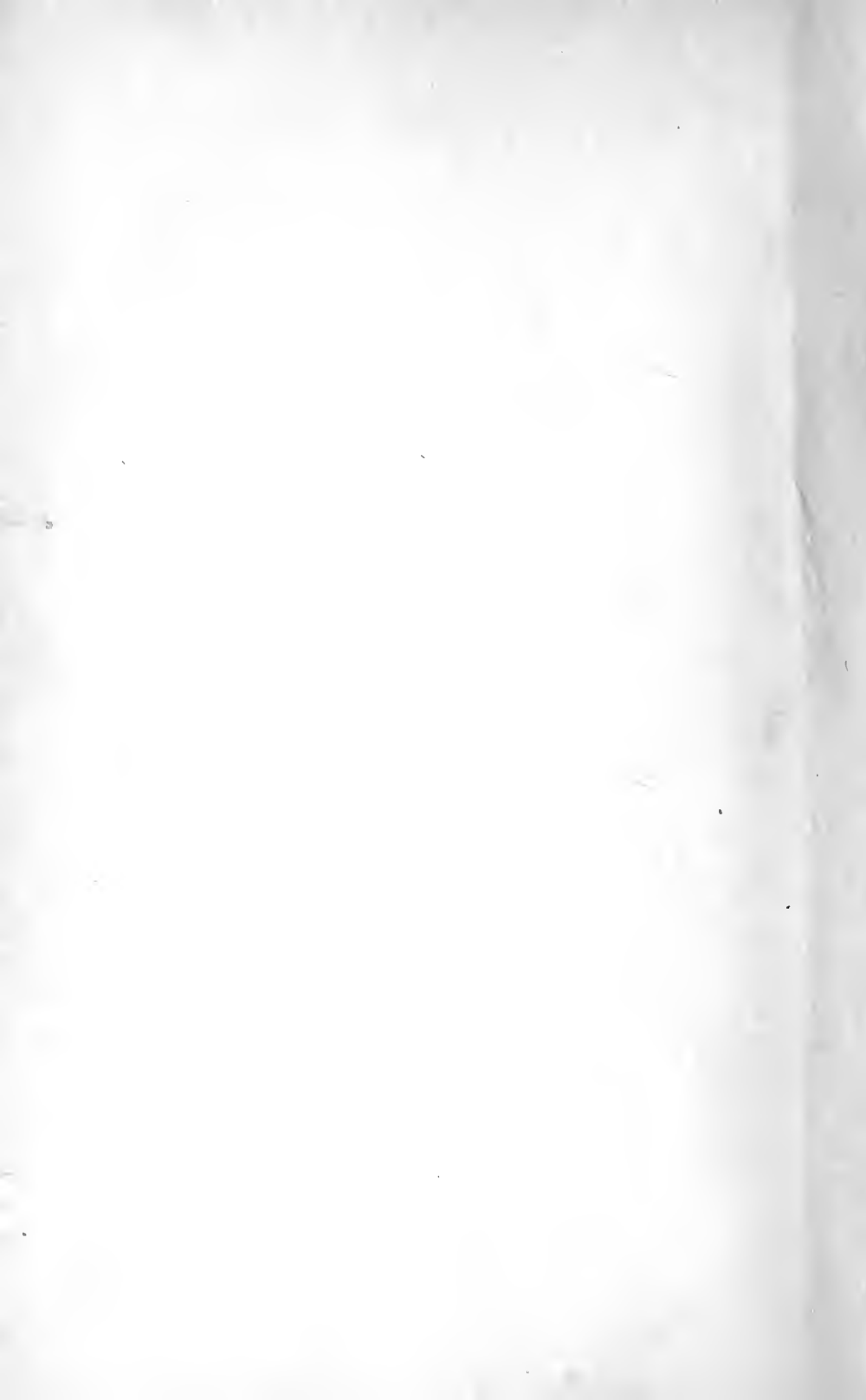
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# The Strategy of the Great War



# The Strategy of the Great War

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## CHAPTER I

### THE MORAL EQUATION

THERE are two aspects to the German débâcle—one material and one moral. Speaking in the narrower, technical sense, Germany lost the war through certain specific errors in military policy. By November, 1918, the consequences of these blunders had brought the German armies in Belgium and France to the edge of a colossal disaster—an exaggerated Sedan or Jena. The German High Command elected to escape destruction by surrendering.

The German military failure was unquestionable. It resulted from unintelligent strategy and a misuse of military resources. But the German moral failure was even more decisive. It resulted from the inescapable limitations of the German character. Speaking in the broadest possible sense, Germany lost the

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war before she began it. She had the physical means to achieve victory on a limited scale—to create, for a time at least, a Middle Europe dominated from Berlin. But she lacked the sagacity to temper her megalomania. Bismarck was dead. He had left no successors. So the Germany of William II bungled along, sacrificing what might have been attainable through a prudent localization of effort to empty and grandiose dreams of Teuton world empire.

The German leaders and people were handicapped at critical stages of the war by not knowing exactly what they were fighting for. A wise statesman would have said: "Let us consolidate our power in Central and Eastern Europe. Let us throw a bridge across the Bosphorus and push our railheads to Bagdad. But let us stop there. That is enough for our generation, as the conquest of Alsace-Lorraine and the creation of the empire were enough for Bismarck's generation."

But there were no wise or moderate statesmen left in Germany. Whenever things looked encouraging at the front all Germans were pan-Germans. In the back of the German brain was the obsession of ethnical and moral superiority which the pan-German propaganda had so powerfully fostered. All classes of Germans were more or less conscious of a mission to go out and conquer the world and then remodel it in the

image of Kultur. This spirit was unreasoning and fanatical. And since they were all deeply affected by it the German leaders gradually lost contact with political and military realities. They began to envisage the war not as a struggle for limited territorial objectives, or political priority on the continent of Europe, but as a duel between a higher form of civilization (their own, of course, which was destined to survive), and various lower forms (those of their enemies, which were destined to perish).

No illusion could have been more baseless than that the Germany of William II was elected by destiny to conquer and transform the world. Germany was too barren spiritually and intellectually to play the rôle of Rome or of Revolutionary France. She could not hope to establish an empire as extensive and durable as that of the Cæsars. She could not even hope to establish one as unstable and transient as Napoleon's.

She had by patient labour forged a military instrument powerful enough to subdue many of her neighbours. But she lacked utterly the moral weapons with which a conquering generation or a conquering civilization must be supplied if its sway is to become permanent

Rome possessed the indubitable moral superiority which reconciles the conquered to the rule of the con-

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queror. The Roman lawgiver completed the work of the Roman legionary. The Roman proconsuls brought the subject peoples peace, order, and security under law. So the golden age of civilized Europe, Asia, and Africa was the age of Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines.

In the first volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, published in 1776, Gibbon wrote of this period:

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.

The Romans were true civilizers and empire builders. So were the French in the earlier years of the Revolution, when they carried through Europe the torch of liberty and the standard of democratic equality. The peoples of the Netherlands, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, whom the French freed from an outworn feudalism, welcomed the deliverance. They benefited materially by their change of status. The introduction of the French civil code, with its equalization of individual rights, was, in itself, a long step toward modern civilization.



Napoleon created the kingdoms of Bavaria and Württemberg and the Grand Duchy of Baden. He organized the Confederation of the Rhine. He enlarged Saxony. All the South German states were vastly stimulated under the Napoleonic régime. They still owe it a debt of gratitude.

In one of the many public squares of Munich stands a monument commemorating the Bavarian soldiers who fell in Napoleon's Moscow campaign. There were thousands of them. One of the inscriptions reads: *Sie sind auch für das Vaterland gestorben* ("They also died for their country"). Possibly in a larger measure than the writer of the inscription intended, Bavaria's sense of obligation to Napoleon's overlordship is thus acknowledged. France carried into these annexed countries ideas and a spirit of progress from which they profited enormously, and hundreds of thousands of their citizens fought without reluctance in the French armies. It was only when Napoleon broke entirely with the traditions of the Revolution and began to exploit these states cold-bloodedly in the effort to further his insane schemes of family aggrandizement that they turned against him and prepared to desert him.

Under Napoleon Poland enjoyed a brief political restoration. He created out of territory allotted to

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Prussia in the Polish partitions the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. He won the confidence of the Poles, although his policy toward them was plainly based on self-interest. He drew on them for a marshal, many generals, and more than one hundred thousand soldiers. Many Poles followed him to France in 1814.

Napoleon delivered Italy from the Austrian yoke and gave the Italians a foretaste of national unity when he created the Kingdom of Italy, with his stepson Eugene as viceroy. He gave the eastern Adriatic provinces autonomy. Italy's political status was greatly improved under the French régime. Spain, too, would have remained a willing ally if Napoleon had not fallen into the fatal error of trying to establish his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne.

Napoleon's own follies wrecked an empire which rested for a time (and might have continued to rest) on the good will of the peoples absorbed into it. But there is no known instance of a subject people reconciling itself to German domination.

There is something in the German character—a surviving strain of barbarism, perhaps—which stands in the way of any expression of magnanimity toward the conquered. The German is no assimilator. He has never been able to impress supposedly inferior peoples with a sense of his ethnical or moral superiority. He

has, in fact, so little confidence in his own superiority that he has never been willing to admit to equality of status or opportunity the subject and supposedly inferior peoples within the German boundaries.

Inflamed by the arrogant chauvinism of the pan-German propagandists, the German people started out in 1914 to impose their civilization on the rest of the world. A futile and pathetically misguided conception! When had the Germans, under the most favouring circumstances, ever Teutonized, or even placated, another race whose hard fate had brought it under German domination?

At the time of the Zabern incident, when Germany was irritated by the thought that Alsace was still unreconciled and perhaps irreconcilable, the *Berliner Tageblatt* published an article comparing the feeling of Savoy and Nice toward France with the feeling of Alsace and Lorraine toward Germany. Savoy and Nice were acquired from Italy by Napoleon III in 1859. Alsace and Lorraine were acquired from France by Bismarck in 1871. Only twelve years' difference in time between the two transactions! Yet nobody but a historian could remember in 1913 that Savoy and Nice had ever belonged to the present royal house of Italy, while the Zabern incident demonstrated that Alsace and Lorraine were hardly more German in affection

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than they were in 1871—despite more than forty years of official proselyting and persecution.

Alsace-Lorraine went to the Prussian school of assimilation for forty-eight years in all. But she never was re-Teutonized, although her people are of an ancient German and Rhine Valley stock. The Poles of Prussia had been under German rule for a century and a quarter. In all that period they had been pitilessly restrained and disciplined. Everything possible was done to eradicate their race and national spirit. They had been forbidden to speak their own language. Their lands had been taken away from them by a ruthless policy of expropriation. Yet they never yielded to German pressure. They relied on the superior tenacity of their own race instincts and culture. And they conquered at last. Parts of Poland which Prussia took nearly a century and a half ago are still more Polish than Prussian, and have properly reverted to the re-established Polish state, on whose coffin the three sovereigns of Russia, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary sat—but sat in vain—for generations.

There is also North Schleswig. This is the Danish part of the province of Schleswig, taken away from the King of Denmark in 1864 by Austria and Prussia. These two confederates divided Holstein and Schleswig between them. But Prussia soon appropriated Aus-

tria's share. By the treaty of Prague, under which Austria legalized the Prussian seizure, it was stipulated that the inhabitants of North Schleswig should have the right to determine by a plebiscite whether to remain Prussian or to go back to Denmark. No plebiscite was ever taken. For more than fifty years Prussia tried to assimilate this little Danish remnant. But all her efforts—including a proscription of the use of the Danish tongue—failed ignominiously.

Not a single alien element within the Prussian or German body politic has been reclaimed through the proselyting energies of German Kultur. Physical power is in itself impotent to awe the mind or conquer the imagination. Only moral virility can do that. The prophets of German destiny looking out over a world on which the stamp of German civilization was to be impressed forgot the Alsatian, Polish, and Danish fizzles. They clung to the primitive belief that the sword is the only civilizer. They carried the sword into Belgium, Poland, the Baltic Provinces, Finland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Serbia, Albania, and Rumania. But everywhere the result was the same. The German conqueror might overrun and trample down peoples. He might erect military governments. But nowhere was he capable of really constructive and assimilative statesmanship. Nowhere could he conciliate or

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extract willing service. As an empire builder, because of Teuton tactlessness, his accomplishment was almost zero.

German policy in Belgium was the most hideous possible revelation of Germany's moral incapacity. As Bethmann-Hollweg admitted, the Germans seized Belgium in violation of treaty guarantees. It was an act of "military necessity." Germany was therefore bound in prudence to make the occupation as little oppressive as practicable to the Belgian people. And Belgium's heroic defence did not lessen the obligation of the invaders to deal generously with a country which had given Germany no shadow of offence and whose sole culpability consisted in lying across the easiest pathway of the German armies into Northern France.

Germany undoubtedly envied Belgium her great port of Antwerp and her strip of coast at the eastern entrance to the English Channel. German policy looked forward to the ultimate absorption of both Holland and Belgium. Statesmanship therefore dictated an attitude of conciliation on the part of the German invaders and a powerful emphasis of the material advantages which might accrue to the Belgians through closer association with the German Empire.

But in the heat of her anger over the stubborn resist-

ance of the Belgians at Liège and over some negligible guerilla fighting in the Liège and Namur districts, Germany unloosed on Belgium those monstrous retaliations which shocked the civilized world. A deliberate programme of frightfulness was carried out against a defenceless civilian population. After Aerschot, Dinant, and Louvain it was next to impossible for any Belgian to consider contact with German civilization as anything but a defilement.

Germany gained some important military advantages by violating Belgian neutrality. She secured an entrance into France and carried the war to the gates of Paris. But she at once forced the hesitating British Government into the anti-German alliance. And her barbarities behind the fighting lines not only excited the undying enmity of the Belgians, but destroyed the last vestige of German moral prestige in the neutral world.

The German lifted his mask at Louvain. Thereafter no cunning or hypocrisy on his part could conceal what a German domination of Europe would mean.

Yet in Belgium he had had a real opportunity to imitate the tactics of Napoleon and to create local support by playing on the racial prejudices and aspirations of a large disaffected native element. If Berlin had suppressed reprisals with an iron hand and had

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protected the Belgian population from military terrorism, rapid progress might have been made in detaching the Flemings from the Walloons.

There had been a century-long antagonism between these two Belgian stocks, based mainly on a difference in language. The Walloons spoke French. The Flemings spoke their own ancient tongue. The former idiom gained a complete ascendancy under the French occupation from 1794 to 1814. It became the legal language for all Belgium. After the Netherlands were united under Dutch sovereignty in 1815 the use of Flemish was gradually restored in Belgian Flanders. This excited Walloon opposition and was one of the causes of the revolution of 1830, when Belgium achieved her independence of Holland.

After independence French became again the official tongue, although the constitution indorsed the principle of a free choice in the matter of languages. The decade from 1830 to 1840 saw the beginnings of the Flemish literary revival, which has persisted ever since. At first it was merely cultural. But from 1870 on it assumed a political aspect also. Agitations for the legalization of the use of Flemish in the criminal courts, in the secondary schools, in the public administration, and in official documents were successful. In recent years the "Flamigants," as they were called, had been



working to make Flemish the exclusive tongue in all the Fleming districts, compelling its adoption in the whole school system up to the university, in local administration and in the relations of the central government with Flemish Belgium.

The Germans knew all this. They had a lever ready made with which to segregate two sensitively antagonistic elements in the Belgian population. They had the opportunity to pose as restorers of an ancient native tongue akin to their own. Moreover, after offering the Flemings lingual freedom, they had a chance to bind them more securely to the German cause by offering them political separation and complete autonomy.

Yet German cunning could not undo the work of German savagery. The atrocities committed by the German soldiery united the Walloons and Flemings in common hatred of the invader. The breach between the two Belgian stocks closed long before the separatist intrigue could get fairly under way. It was not until December, 1915, that Governor General Bissing converted the State University of Ghent into a Flemish University. It was not until March, 1917, that Belgium was partitioned into two military pro-consulates, Brussels becoming the Flemish capital and Namur the Walloon capital. Finally, in December, 1917, a

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Flemish legislative body, acting under German military authority, proclaimed the complete independence of Flanders.

The few Belgians who were willing to accept racial "self-determination" from the German oppressor styled themselves Activists. They were attracted mostly by the high salaries and personal privileges offered them. But they never had a genuine following. The real leaders and forces in the former Flemish movement denounced Activism as treason. The Activists were "a staff without troops," as the Germans themselves were ultimately forced to admit. The new Flemish state, pro-Teuton in its leanings and intended to form the basis for a completely Teutonized Belgium, remained to the end a political fiction. The German despoiler, murderer, and terrorist had bungled the job of the German "liberator." The Flemings wished to speak their own language, even though it was cousin to the German. But they shrank with abhorrence from any political "liberation" which might come to them from the instigators of the Louvain massacre.

The two German political pro-consuls in Belgium were Bissing and Falkenhausen. Both were typical German bureaucrats, without vision or humane instincts. Cardinal Mercier, who defied their tyranny, said of them:

Falkenhausen was more cruel and inhuman than Bissing, and more perfidious, insidious, and dangerous. There was not much to choose between them, however.

They were true advance agents of the civilization which Germany intended to inflict on the rest of the world.

German policy thus failed utterly in Belgium, where conditions favoured local divisions and partial assimilation. It failed as conspicuously in the dependencies detached from Russia. The Germans also entered Poland as "liberators." They promised an end of Russian misrule. But the Poles had had some experience with Prussian methods of "liberation." They preferred Russia's tender mercies to Prussia's. They endured for more than three years the joint German and Austrian occupation and gave a passive assent to German-Austrian plans for creating a Polish buffer kingdom, under Teuton protection.

Their lot was alleviated by the inability of Germany and Austria to agree on the status of the new state. The Polish Regency Council was able to play one claimant off against the other. Both Germany and Austria tried to recruit troops in Poland. They succeeded indifferently, except in a few districts, along the West Galician border. The Poles had flocked by the tens

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of thousands to Napoleon's standard. But they balked at serving either Germany or Austria. The Polish Legion, created by the Regency, became in the end a national rather than a vassal organization. It was a peril rather than a help to the Teuton allies, and it turned with the Regency against them both when the German situation on the West Front became critical.

The Baltic Provinces and Lithuania were much less anti-German than Poland was. Germany at least promised and gave them a sort of political "self-determination." Economically, Courland, Livonia, and Esthonia had closer natural attachments to Germany than to Russia. They were in the German Baltic zone. But their rapprochement to Germany was half-hearted. They were willing to accept German princes and grand dukes as rulers. But they gave Germany little economic and no military aid.

Ukraine owed her independence directly to Germany and should have been turned into a useful German ally. She had both grain and "cannon fodder" to contribute. But here German rapacity again overrode sound military policy. The German satraps set out to strip the Ukraine bare of food supplies the moment they were installed at Kiev. They plundered and misgoverned, quickly displacing the government which signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk and substituting a dictatorship.

Governor-General Eichhorn was assassinated and Germany began to do in the Ukraine exactly what she had done in Belgium. Whatever power she retained rested on the sword. The Ukraine was quickly converted from a political asset into a political liability.

In Finland alone the Germans exhibited some gleams of political intelligence. They crushed the power of the Bolsheviks and restored a conservative government. Finland cheerfully accepted a German alliance and could have been converted into a valuable German recruiting ground, except for the fact that the alliance was concluded too late. Finland was willing to fight for Germany between March and August, 1918. After August she scented German disaster and was no longer willing to fight.

If Germany had broken down the Russian front a year earlier than she did she would have had it in her power to develop Finland, Esthonia, Livonia, Lithuania, Courland, and the Ukraine into feeders for her armies, just as Napoleon had used Poland, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, and the German states. But serious mistakes of strategy in 1916 and 1917 and the utter lack in her make-up of the empire-building instinct fortunately debarred her from exploiting with any thoroughness the populations assigned to her mercies by the treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

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World empire is something incorporeal as well as physical. It can be attained only by nations which add to military power some spiritual ascendancy, some sterling moral quality. Germany, as the war was to prove again and again, lacked imperial stature. She had none of the upbuilding, civilizing power of Rome, none of the crusading fervour of Revolutionary France. In her political and military policy she imitated rather the futile cruelty and materialism of Spain.

It was morally impossible for Germany to conquer the world, since her cause was bad and her purposes were ignoble. One clear-minded truth-teller among the Germans saw this from the start. That was Dr. Wilhelm Mühlton. He wrote in his Diary on August 4, 1914: "I cannot too often din it into the ears of the Germans that what is lacking in moral superiority cannot be replaced by force." And again: "Enthusiasm at the start is cheap and easily excited. It can last only when one fights for a better cause and a higher ideal than his opponents, and offers even the opponent the opportunity of freedom and progress."

Germany offered no opponent, even Russia, "the opportunity of freedom and progress." She did not fight to spread civilization or to benefit humanity. She fought to stay the progress of the stars. There-

fore, in the broad sense, she was doomed to defeat before she drew the sword.

But in the narrower sense there was no insuperable obstacle to her creating a limited military empire in Central Europe had she had the intelligence to make her strategy fruitful, getting the best results out of her vast initial superiority in military resources.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NUMERICAL EQUATION

GERMANY fell a victim to delusions of grandeur. In his book, *Germany and the Next War*, published in 1911, General Bernhardi said that the Germans would be obliged in the near future to choose between "world power and downfall."

That phrase summed up the empty imaginings of the pan-German agitation. A rational German military policy in 1911 or in 1914 would not have contemplated two such alternatives. If Prussia intended to engage in another war of conquest, she had only to follow the precedents set by Frederick the Great in the eighteenth century and by Moltke and Bismarck in the nineteenth. Those precedents did not compel a gamble between world power and ruin.

The Prussian state was a slow growth. First, it embraced only the petty Mark of Brandenburg. Then the Duchy of East Prussia was acquired. Pomerania was conquered from the Swedes; West Prussia and



Posen were taken from the Poles; Silesia was grabbed from Austria, and a considerable part of Saxony from the Saxons. The Rhine province was acquired at the Congress of Vienna.

Such was Prussia's extent after the epoch of Frederick the Great. This erratic genius nearly swamped his kingdom in the Seven Years' War. His ambition led him, with only casual support from England, into a struggle with a great European coalition, comprising Austria, Saxony, France, Sweden, and Russia. The odds against him were far heavier than the odds against Germany in 1914. He was saved by his extraordinary luck and by his own great military talents. But he never aimed at conquering Europe. His policy was one of conquest on a modest instalment plan.

Bismarck followed Frederick the Great's example, but moved with greater caution. He got Prussia into no war in which she would have to fight at a disadvantage. As a consequence he succeeded in annexing Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, and Nassau, ejecting Austria from the German household, creating the modern Prussianized German Empire, and attaching Alsace-Lorraine to it as a crownland.

Victory over France in 1870-71 made Germany the first military power in Europe. The alliance with

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Austria-Hungary and Italy, which Bismarck concluded, secured Germany thereafter against a counter attack. For more than forty years she nursed her resources with a view to improving her Continental position through another successful war. When the time came she was perfectly prepared to enlarge her European holdings. The chances were all heavily in her favour if she could confine the war to Europe.

If Bismarck had been in power, or if the newer generation had been able to produce a statesman of his calibre, the war of 1914 would probably have followed the course of the wars of 1866 and 1870. Germany would have emerged from it with an enlarged "place in the sun." She would have been content to digest her acquisitions and to prepare patiently for further expansion.

But Bismarck's successors, handicapped by having to cope with the instability and restless vainglory of William II, had allowed the Triple Alliance to be undermined. Italy had been estranged by a series of diplomatic blunders. By 1914 she had become merely a nominal ally—a neutral, likely in time of trial to be converted into an enemy. Yet even with Italy hostile, Germany was still equal to fighting another prosperous European war. She was fully conscious of her strength. She was, in fact, so confident of it that in taking on

a struggle with France and Russia she was willing to attack Belgium and thereby certainly force Great Britain from the outset into the circle of her enemies.

Germany was justified in the military sense in her contempt of the mere factor of numbers. Those who visualized the war merely as a contest between masses of population—to be decided on the basis of attrition—were misled into proclaiming from the very beginning that Germany must lose because she was so manifestly weaker in man power. Hilaire Belloc was perhaps the most conspicuous champion of the attrition theory—a theory which enjoyed much favour with the Allied publics in the days of Joffre's enforced policy of "nibbling" on the Western Front. But this theory was unsound. There were other factors more important than numbers. Russia was soon to prove this. The most populous of the major belligerents, she turned out to be the most undependable and was the first to go to the wall.

On the census returns the Central Powers were outnumbered in 1914 and 1915 more than two to one. But the census figures were no true index of military strength. Taking the population returns of the years immediately preceding the war the man-power equation stood something like this:

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### THE CENTRAL POWERS

Germany.....	68,000,000
Austria-Hungary.....	52,000,000
Turkey.....	21,000,000
Bulgaria (entered the war in 1915)	4,750,000
Total.....	<u>145,750,000</u>

### THE ENTENTE POWERS

France (without her colonies).....	39,600,000
The United Kingdom.....	46,000,000
Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.....	20,000,000
Belgium.....	7,500,000
Serbia and Montenegro.....	3,500,000
Portugal.....	6,000,000
Russia.....	178,000,000
Italy (entered the war in 1915).....	35,000,000
Total.....	<u>335,600,000</u>

The balance was turned still more heavily against Germany by the entrance into the war of Japan (which, however, operated only in the Far East and sent no troops to Europe); by the use which France was able to make of her African colonies, from which she drew more than five hundred thousand regulars and auxiliaries; and by the forces which Great Britain eventually raised in British India, Ceylon, and the other Asiatic colonies. By 1918 India alone had furnished more than one million men (mostly auxiliaries).

But there is a vast difference between paper man

power and mobilized, trained, and equipped man power. In a European war which would be won or lost within four years the Central Powers were certain not to be outnumbered in the field at any time within the first three years. They were certain to have an actual preponderance in military strength throughout the greater part of the conflict.

What were the requirements of the Central Powers on the various fronts? Germany could mobilize about 2,000,000 in the first months of the war and 2,000,000 more by the spring of 1915. France and Great Britain together could mobilize hardly 1,500,000 in the first months and put hardly 1,500,000 more in the field by the spring of 1915.

Austria-Hungary could mobilize 1,500,000 in 1914 and have 1,000,000 more available in 1915. Russia had an inexhaustible man power; but she could hardly hope at any time to arm, equip, and maintain in the fighting lines more than 3,500,000 men. Turkey could be counted on to hold her own pretty well for a couple of years against the Russians in Armenia and the British in Mesopotamia and Palestine, unless the Allies could carry the Dardanelles by a surprise attack.

The full strength of the three major Central Powers was available in the earlier stages of the war. But Great Britain, which lacked even the rudiments of a

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military system, could not develop her land strength before the middle of 1916, or make any highly effective use of it until the middle of 1917. But by the middle of 1916 the Russian collapse had already begun.

Germany needed on the West Front in 1914 about 1,500,000 men and on the East Front about 500,000. Russia's unexpected victories in Galicia increased the German burden in the East, where Austria-Hungary proved unequal to the task assigned her. But in 1915 Germany had man power enough to defend her lines in France and Belgium and to go East, relieve Galicia, conquer Poland and Courland, invade Lithuania and Russia proper, and overrun Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania. She was able to crush Russia and at the same time to create an ample strategical reserve—much of which was to be foolishly wasted in 1916 at Verdun.

Even the entrance of Italy into the war in May, 1915, did not challenge German superiority or wrest the offensive from the German High Command. Italy spent a year and a half trying to make an impression on the Austrian defences in the Alps and behind the Isonzo. Before the Italian attack could become threatening the Russians had been flung back to the line of the Dvina River and the Pripet Marshes, and Austria-Hungary could safely transfer her best troops to the Italian front.

The sufficiency of German (Central Allied) numbers for a strictly European war is best attested by the fact that, except in Turkey, the Central Powers were able to maintain the offensive almost uninterruptedly throughout the struggle. The German General Staff imposed its strategy on the Entente. It was not until July, 1918, when American man power became available, that the offensive passed definitely and irrevocably into Allied hands.

The attrition theory of 1914 and 1915 therefore broke down absolutely, in so far as it was based on the discrepancy in numbers between the Central States and the original members of the Entente. Mere numbers are not equivalent to military strength. The two-to-one advantage of the Entente in population was offset by the obstacles in the way of a conversion of latent war power into military energy. Time was one of these obstacles. Others were an unfavourable geographical position, deficiency in military training and equipment, greater industrial unpreparedness for war, and lack of unified leadership. All these weighed heavily against the Entente, making its impressive numerical preponderance only a tantalizing and elusive asset. The superior masses at the disposition of the Allied governments could not hope to wear down the Teuton armies so long as the latter enjoyed the enormous ad-

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vantages (in addition to actual equality on the fighting lines) of better equipment, heavier guns, interior lines of communication, unified strategy, and the freedom of action which accompanies possession of the offensive.

Parallels in military history are often highly misleading, because they ignore vital changes in military conditions. Theoretically the situation of the Central Powers may have seemed in 1914, 1915, and 1916 almost as hopeless as the situation of Prussia during the Seven Years' War. The Central States were beleaguered as Prussia was. France, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia were at first glance as overpowering a hostile combination as France, Saxony, Austria, and Russia, had been. But it was, in fact, nothing like so overpowering, as events were to prove. Frederick the Great owed his salvation to a change of sovereigns in Russia, Peter III reversing the policy of the Empress Elizabeth and going over to the side of Prussia.

But in this war Russia, a colossus in extent and numbers compared to what she was in 1762, was actually defeated in the field before she deserted the Entente coalition. Cut off from her allies and limited in industrial resources, she could not stand the killing pace of modern war. She had yielded in 1904-05 to the numerically inferior strength of Japan. Now she yielded to the numerically inferior strength of Germany.



In Frederick the Great's time a soldier was a soldier. The Russians were not far below the Prussians or the French in fighting and staying power. They stood up against Napoleon in many battles. They defeated him at Eylau. The weapons of that day put all armies more or less on an equality, if courage and endurance were equal. In the smaller armies of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century there was far more evenness of quality. Under universal service the military defects of the backward nations became accentuated. In his book *A Nation Trained in Arms or a Militia?* published in 1918, Lieutenant-General Baron Freytag-Loringhoven, Deputy Chief of the German General Staff, who had himself served when a young man in the Russian army, says very justly:

Far too many of the conditions which at one time contributed to the efficiency of the Russian troops ceased to exist after the middle of the nineteenth century; they could not, indeed, any longer exist.

In modern war, too, equipment has become a dominant factor. War is largely a contest in mechanical efficiency. In such a contest Russia was outclassed from the start. Relatively, she was more outclassed than Turkey. For from the autumn of 1915 on German military supplies could move freely into Turkey,

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while the supplies which the Allies could furnish Russia were inadequate to prevent the great Russian retreat of the summer of 1915, which was the beginning of Russia's downfall.

Short interior lines united the German Western and Eastern fronts. The Prussian railway system had been specially constructed to facilitate transfers from one front to the other. It is but four hundred miles from the Rhine to the Vistula, and only the troops themselves had to be shifted, since there were ample artillery and supply depots behind the two fighting areas.

France and Great Britain, on the other hand, had only the most meagre communications with Russia. They were barred by the Dardanelles forts from the warm water route to the Black Sea ports. They could not bring out food supplies, of which Southern Russia had a surplus, or send in munitions and heavy guns, which the Russian armies lacked. The only open paths by sea were to Kola and Archangel, or to Vladivostok. But Russia's railroad system from the Arctic ports or from the Pacific was utterly inadequate to handle the supply cargoes landed by Allied or neutral ships. Russia could last as a real military factor only until her own resources failed. And both her resources and her morale were failing from the middle of 1915 on.

Germany entered the war immensely better supplied with heavy artillery than France was. It took France nearly two years to overcome the handicap. Great Britain was totally unsupplied at the start. She could not expect to make up her deficiencies within three years. Russia never made hers up.

When Mackensen launched his great drive on the Dunajec in May, 1915, his superiority in artillery over the Russians was stupendous. His guns smothered the Russian fire. The march from the Dunajec to Volhynia was an artillerists' parade. The infantry merely had to seize the enemy positions which the German big guns had made untenable. In war like this numbers on the Russian side became an inconsequential factor. Numbers were, in fact, at times only a hindrance to the Russian retreat. So long as the German artillery kept advancing the Russian armies had to keep on retiring.

The same thing happened later in the year in Serbia. Alexander F. L. Roda-Roda, a brilliant Viennese literary man and war correspondent, wrote a description of the Serbian campaign which vividly and humorously described this new aspect of war. Campaigning was conducted on stop-watch, union-labour principles. The artillery worked every morning from eight o'clock until noon. The supporting infantry worked from

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noon until 4 P.M. Then the batteries were hauled forward to the demolished Serbian positions, which the infantry had occupied.

This mechanical advance continued for weeks through the Serbian mountains. The batteries were out of range of the enemy guns. They went through their daily practice undisturbed. Even the infantry rarely saw a Serbian soldier.

There is an element of exaggeration in this description. But it throws an interesting sidelight on the superiority in the mechanical appliances of modern war which Germany possessed—especially against opponents on the Eastern Front—and which made her campaigns in Galicia, Poland, and Serbia in 1915 and her campaign in Rumania in 1916 seem more or less like a *Kriegspiel*, with the uncertainties of war eliminated.

In the winter of 1914-15 Field Marshal Hindenburg, then just risen to fame, said of the Russians that they fought well in trenches, thus maintaining the defensive traditions of the Russian armies. But he predicted their defeat because they were inferior to the Germans in education and moral discipline, and because victory must go to the combatant with the "stronger nerves." This was only another way of saying that the Russians would be unable to stand up against the mechanical

superiority of the Germans. Men get discouraged fighting against machinery. Had the Russians had the better technical equipment the weakness in "nerves" would have been all on the Teuton side. In the last half of 1918, in fact, Germany showed the white feather on the Western Front, after less punishment than the Russian armies had suffered in 1915 in the retreat from the Dunajec.

Germany was the first belligerent to use the big Skoda and Krupp type of siege howitzer which battered down the forts of Liège, Namur, and Antwerp. She first produced the long range weapons of the sort which bombarded Dunkirk and Paris. She was the first to employ high explosive shells and to develop the massed artillery offensive. She was the inventor of the flame thrower, of the poison gas wave, and poison gas shell. Armed with these instruments of "frightfulness" she could well afford to discount Allied preponderance in crude man power.

The Central States were not long in achieving unity of command. Austria-Hungary was quickly cured of all ambition for co-belligerency with Germany. Berlin gave Vienna plenty of rope in the early months of the war. It was a wise policy. Thereafter the Austrians meekly took orders from the German General Staff.

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The Austro-Hungarians expected to play a great rôle on the Eastern Front. Germany had decided in August, 1914, to throw almost her entire mobilized strength into France. She left less than five hundred thousand men in East Prussia—merely second line material. They were to hold off a Russian invasion from Northern Poland while the Austro-Hungarians took the offensive in Southern Poland, striking for Lublin and trying to isolate Warsaw.

It was a bold conception. It failed completely, however, because both Vienna and Berlin had counted on a tardy Russian mobilization.

An Austro-Hungarian army under Dankl moved north-east from the Vistula into Poland. It won a victory at Krasnik and advanced confidently toward Lublin. Had it reached this town the Russians would have been obliged to abandon the line of the Vistula from Warsaw south to Ivangorod, as they had to abandon it a year later when Mackensen followed in Dankl's footsteps.

Dankl was supported on his right by Auffenberg, and the latter's right was extended in a curve to cover Lemberg. But the Russian mobilization on the line of Brest-Litovsk had been effected with great rapidity. Russian armies appeared from the north-east, east, and south-east, executing a concentric movement on Lem-

berg. The Austro-Hungarian forces south of the city were driven back and Auffenberg was badly beaten on the sector north of it, at Rawa-Russka. The connection between Auffenberg and Dankl was broken and the Austro-Hungarian armies were chased back in disorder beyond the San and the Carpathians.

It was a bitter humiliation to the Austrian General Staff, but a wholesome one. From the winter of 1914-15 on the Austrian military establishment was virtually absorbed into the German. The Austrians fought no more offensives of their own, although Germany later turned over to them the defence of Trieste and the Trentino. All the strategy of the Central Powers was shaped absolutely in Berlin, and this unity of direction was worth many army corps.

The original Entente Powers never achieved unified military control. With two wholly detached fronts, a close co-ordination of military effort was impossible. Russia had to go her own way. Later Italy went her own way. The British and Russians never co-operated in Asiatic Turkey.

On the Western Front proper the British and the French fought side by side. France was the natural leader. But the increasing importance of the British military contribution made it exceedingly difficult for Great Britain to forego independence of command.

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National pride and sensitiveness stood in the way of military efficiency.

The Italian disaster at Caporetto, in the fall of 1917, and the British disaster before St. Quentin, in the spring of 1918, were particularly striking demonstrations of the cost of disunity of leadership. But even then unity would hardly have been accomplished except for the intervention of the United States. The American command had no pride of opinion. American influence in Allied councils, added to the saving common sense of Premier Lloyd George, finally forced Foch's selection as generalissimo. That was one of America's greatest contributions to Allied victory. It made a real Allied offensive possible for the first time since August, 1914.

Germany really lost the war in the winter of 1916-17, when she hounded the United States out of neutrality and into belligerency. But the Allies did not put themselves in a position to win the war until they decided to fight as a unit, and not separately.

Looking back to the beginnings of the war, the calculations as to its outcome based on population and the attrition theory seem more than ever grotesque. In a contest between the original groups of belligerents (including Italy) numbers would not have won. It is clear now that Germany failed only because she car-



ried the war to America. Otherwise she had sufficient resources and enjoyed enough military advantages to win at least a partial victory. And even a draw would have been a victory for her, so long as she retained control of that Middle Europe which she had erected out of the territory of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey.

Germany had the troops, artillery, munitions, technical appliances, and organization to win with. She had competent generals of division and generals of armies. But she was woefully lacking in genuine political and military leaders.

Maximilian Harden said of William II that he was only a "showman." His cheap theatrical quality was not unknown to the men who surrounded him and in a measure controlled him. But his faults were their faults also. Neither in the group of statesmen and diplomats nor in the group of military men into whose hands the destinies of Germany fell after war was declared was there one figure of first-class ability. German public life had become sterile. The Imperial Chancellors, from Bethmann-Hollweg to Maximilian of Baden, were mere place holders, without authority, convictions, or courage. They were the tools of the military group. Prince Bülow was the only civilian in Germany fit to be compared with the Bismarckian

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generation. And neither the Emperor nor the military autocrats wanted to make use of his at least respectable abilities.

In the military group Tirpitz and Ludendorff stood out — both narrow, domineering, parochial-minded, typical of all that was worst temperamentally and intellectually in modern Germany. These two made a wreck of German military policy. Their leadership offset the indubitable strategic advantages which Germany possessed. By changing the character of the war they made it impossible for Germany to end it without unexampled disaster. They took seriously the Bernhardi alternative of "world power or downfall." And they sought world power in so senseless a manner as to make downfall inevitable.

In the two or three decades before 1914 the German mind had become corroded with chauvinism. Modesty, moderation, self-distrust had become less than ever German characteristics. Imitating the Kaiser, all Germans of light and leading assumed a tone of boastfulness and self-glorification. Says Dr. Mühlton:

At home the social and political leaders acted as though the German was at the forefront the world over and was its ideal of the coming man, since his culture, his power, his principles, his aims were higher and broader than those of all other peoples.

All Germans who were in a position to influence the policy of the government thought alike. And under these leaders, puffed with egomania, the German people rushed down a precipice into the sea. Germany was not destroyed by the weight of outside numbers. She was destroyed by madness within. She had nothing to fear from Russia's 175,000,000 moujiks. Her star set when she deliberately expanded a European war into a world war, thereby neutralizing and nullifying the enormous military advantages which would have enabled her to break down the original European coalition against her and might have enabled her to create a Teutonized empire stretching from Berlin to Badgad, from Hamburg to Herat.

## CHAPTER III

### GERMANY'S LONG RUN OF LUCK

THE Goddess of Fortune was overgenerous to the Germans. They took her gifts arrogantly. They had none of the old Greek dread of her uninterrupted favour. They presumed on their good luck as no other nation has ever done. But Fortune had her revenge. By the time she was ready to turn her face away she had killed the Germans with overkindness.

Schiller wrote a famous short poem, entitled *The Ring of Polykrates*. All Germany has known the work for more than a century. But modern Germany had lost the sense of the words. Schiller retold the Greek legend of a king of Samos, whose good fortune was phenomenal. His guest, an exiled king of Egypt, became alarmed about this ominous run of luck, and advised Polykrates to throw into the sea the thing he valued most in his whole kingdom. Polykrates sacrificed his favourite ring. Next day a fisherman brought a fish to the palace as a present, and when the cook

cut it open the king's ring appeared. The former Egyptian monarch took his leave in haste, exclaiming:

*Die Götter wollen dein Verderben.  
Fort eil' ich, nicht mit dir zu sterben.*

[The gods are bent on your destruction.  
I hurry away, so as not to die with you.]

Germany was a spoiled child of fortune during the first two and a half years of the war. But she never sought to placate the fates. She never made a single sacrifice to superstition or prudence. The U-boat was her ring of Polykrates. She would not abate its illegal and monstrous use. And that decision brought her to ruin.

It is worth while recalling the many good turns by which Germany benefited. Her first extraordinary piece of luck was the escape to Constantinople of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*. These two warships were trapped in the Mediterranean. They were obliged to go to Messina to coal. They should have been hemmed in from the south and east and driven toward Gibraltar. But steaming out of Messina they made for the Dardanelles, evading the Allied squadrons lying in wait for them. Their arrival at Constantinople assured Turkey's accession to the Central Alliance. They were nominally transferred to the Young Turk government. But the Young Turk leaders, working hand

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in glove with the German Ambassador, Baron Wangenheim, used the big battle-cruiser *Goeben* to terrorize the population of the Turkish capital and also to conduct the raid on the northern Black Sea ports, which put Turkey dramatically into the war through an overt act against Russia.

If the *Goeben* and *Breslau* had been captured—or even the *Goeben* alone—Turkey's participation might have been delayed—possibly prevented. The Allied admiralities had calculated that the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* would not run for the Dardanelles, since the Treaty of Paris, of 1856, and the Treaty of London, of 1871, both provided that warships should not use the straits except by special permission of the Sultan, which could be granted only in time of peace. When the Allied commanders found that the two German war vessels had entered the straits, a true appreciation of the emergency would have led them to force that barrier themselves. It was one of the critical moments of the war. But, as was to be the case for the next three years with Allied policy in the Near East, military advantage was sacrificed to timidity, irresolution, and foolish preconceptions.

In his book, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, the observant American envoy to Constantinople says of the escape of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*:

I have often speculated on what would have happened if the English battle-cruisers which pursued the *Breslau* and the *Goeben* up to the mouth of the Dardanelles had not been too gentlemanly to violate international law. Suppose they had entered the straits, attacked the German cruisers in the Marmora, and sunk them. They could have done this, and, knowing all that we know now, such an action would have been justified. Not improbably the destruction would have kept Turkey out of the war. For the arrival of these cruisers made it inevitable that Turkey, when the proper time came, should join forces with Germany. With them the Turkish navy became stronger than the Russian Black Sea fleet, and thus made it certain that Russia could make no attack on Constantinople.

Germany in the first weeks of the war thus was able to close definitely to the Allies the warm water route to Russia. The preservation of communications with Russia was the primary strategic object of the Entente. Could they keep Turkey neutral or eventually buy, cajole, or force her into opening the Dardanelles, Great Britain, France, and Russia could reasonably expect to defeat Germany and Austria-Hungary without aid from Italy or the United States.

But, like a pure windfall, Constantinople dropped early in August, 1914, into German hands. In the Sea of Marmora the two fugitive German cruisers became of more value to Germany than all the rest

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of Germany's high seas fleet. They alone of all Tirpitz's surface navy were to prove themselves a profitable military investment.

To the Allies, in 1914, 1915, and 1916, possession of Constantinople would have more than offset the loss of territory they had suffered in Belgium and Northern France. The Entente strategists could not see this at first, and never saw it clearly enough. They refrained from entering the straits in 1914. The next year they made a half-hearted effort to enter them and failed ingloriously, when, with a little better management, success was in sight. Germany held her breath while the Dardanelles forts were attacked by the Allied fleets in February and March, 1915. But again fortune was more than liberal to the Germans. The Gallipoli campaign went down to history as a tragic Allied disaster. After that Bulgaria joined the Central Powers, Serbia was conquered, and a free corridor was opened through the Balkans from Berlin to Constantinople. Russia's isolation, except on the Arctic Ocean side and through far-off Vladivostok, was clinched and Russia's exhaustion as a military power was assured.

Everywhere in the Near East events continued to play steadily into Germany's hand. Sir Edward Grey had been the ruling spirit in the London conferences which had tried to straighten out affairs in the Balkans



after the first Balkan War. The net result of these negotiations had been to create the burlesque state of Albania and put William of Wied, a burlesque monarch, on its throne. They had also forced the second Balkan War, which ended with Bulgaria's collapse and the partition of Bucharest.

Sir Edward Grey, an amiable pacifist and compromiser, was completely out of touch with the realities of Balkan politics. He did not understand the fierce passions, jealousies, and hatreds of the Balkan peoples. He tried to deal with Ferdinand of Bulgaria as if that worthy were, as he claimed to be, a "good European."

Greece was an ally of Serbia, the two countries having just finished a successful war against Turkey and a successful war against Bulgaria. Venizelos, the greatest of the statesmen of modern Greece, was in power at Athens. The Allies wanted to enlist Greece in the Dardanelles enterprise and offered her liberal compensations. Venizelos was an ardent friend of the Entente. But when it came to realizing Greek aid Allied diplomacy fell between the two stools of Greek ambitions and Italian ambitions. It also encountered, without understanding it, the veiled hostility of King Constantine—a pro-German at heart, who was to develop more and more into a malignant enemy of the Entente

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and as faithful a tool of Berlin as was his former arch-enemy, the Czar of the Bulgars.

It is a curious circumstance that the Allies were to suffer enormously in Greece as well as in Russia from distaff politics. Constantine's policy was shaped by his wife's relationship to the German Kaiser. She was the Kaiser's sister. So Constantine considered himself a Hohenzollern by marriage. In that rôle he did not scruple to sacrifice the interests of Greece on the family altar.

The Empress of Russia was a Hessian princess, and her great influence in the court at Petrograd kept alive a pro-German cabal, which apparently remained in treasonable communication with Berlin, betrayed military secrets, and obstructed the delivery of supplies to the armies. In 1916, Stürmer, the Russian Prime Minister, helped to manœuvre Rumania into declaring war and then did what he could covertly to abandon her to the Germans.

Both Constantine and the Empress paid a tardy penalty for their perfidy. But their services to the German cause, while they lasted, were invaluable. They differed from Ferdinand's and Enver Pasha's only in that they were not paid for out of the great German corruption fund. Allied diplomacy could never have put the Czarina under bonds for good be-

haviour. But it could have ousted Constantine long before it did, because Greece was a ward of France, Great Britain, and Russia. Greece should have been released long before 1917 for active service with the Entente, with whose interests those of the Greek people were thoroughly in harmony.

Bulgaria, the loser in the second Balkan War, still bitter and vengeful, was the natural ally of Germany and Austria-Hungary. But Sir Edward Grey and Delcassé dealt with her as if a passionless and enlightened self-interest could convert her into a friend and associate. Many powerful British influences were pro-Bulgar, and believed that Bulgaria, Serbia, Rumania, and Greece might be brought to lie down together in concord by means of a few sleight-of-hand territorial readjustments.

Sir Edward Grey was dispassionate enough to ask both Serbia and Greece to surrender portions of their territory to the Bulgars. Serbia was outraged by this suggestion. So was Greece, although Venizelos magnanimously agreed to recommend the sacrifice. But nothing came of these ill-conceived moves, except to put into Constantine's hands a weapon with which to demolish Venizelos's prestige.

Bulgaria should have been forced to declare her attitude early in 1915. She was not ready for war then;

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nor was Germany ready to invade Serbia. The Russian armies were still astride the Carpathians. But Ferdinand cleverly hoodwinked the Allied diplomats. Mackensen and Hindenburg spent the spring and summer driving the Russians out of Galicia and Poland. In the fall, when Ferdinand had lifted the mask and Serbia was ready to be crushed, the Allies could only look on impotently.

The Teuton programme of conquest developed without a hitch, so far as the Eastern Front was concerned. There was something uncanny in the precision with which it unfolded. Fortune smiled everywhere on German plans, while the Allies seemed to touch nothing except to bungle it.

In the West, too, the Germans profited disproportionately from what might be called the accidental developments of the military situation. France had prepared a strong defence of her eastern frontier. But the eastern frontier could be turned by an enemy coming through Belgium.

The French General Staff had ample warning of Germany's purpose to violate Belgian neutrality. General Bernhardt in *Germany and the Next War*, published in 1911, had spoken of a flank movement across Belgium as a matter of course. Possibly the French High Command thought that this was merely a bluff

to distract French attention from the defence of the Alsace-Lorraine and Luxemburg front.

At any rate, Joffre let the defence of the northern frontier go by the board, and the German armies found an easy path up the valley of the Meuse and across the plain of Northern France as far as the outskirts of Paris. Thus they were enabled to fight the first great battle of the war far in the rear of the northern frontier forts. South of the Marne and directly east of Paris, they were well behind even the secondary French defences, like the line of La Fère-Laon-Rheims. They had wrested from the French that advantage of position which the latter had counted on to neutralize the German advantage in numbers.

The Germans committed an international crime, gravely damaging to them in the larger moral aspect, when they violated Belgian neutrality. That crime made Germany an outlaw in the world and turned all neutral sympathy away from her. But the immediate results of the eruption through Belgium were of enormous military value. The German armies obtained a lodgment on French soil at very little cost. They secured the "elbow room" which they needed and which they would have lacked if they had based their offensive on Metz. They were able to reap at once the advantages of a war of movement, in which the

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weight of their somewhat superior numbers and completer mechanical equipment had the best chance to make itself felt.

The German High Command lost the first battle of the Marne through overconfidence. The younger Moltke and all his lieutenants undervalued both the French army and Joffre's leadership. They thought they were marching to another Sedan. Instead they walked heedlessly into an ambush. The German military temperament disclosed its weaknesses at the Marne, just as it was to disclose them at every other real crisis of the war. Complacency at Grand Headquarters swiftly nullified the effect of the really brilliant initial successes of the 1914 campaign.

Germany might not have been able to crush France in September, 1914. It is not clear that she would ever have been able to crush France, even with the wisest use of her superior resources. But with a more alert and wary leadership she might easily have gathered in the first months of the war the full fruits of her almost unopposed march to Paris. She might have compelled Joffre to abandon the French capital, as she had already compelled the Belgians to evacuate Brussels.

At the First Marne Germany threw away the hope of an imposing victory on the West Front. Circumstances now compelled her to turn for victory to the

East—her natural field of conquest. She had successfully begun and then botched her campaign in the West under conditions which were extremely favourable to the offensive. The Allied armies were painfully short of machine guns and heavy artillery. The power of the defensive had been steadily increasing with the perfection of small arms and field guns. But the defensive had not yet completely found itself. The big Skoda and Krupp howitzers had relegated the old-fashioned fortress to the scrap-heap. Liège, Namur, and Antwerp fell with incredible rapidity. Almost overnight, elaborate fortifications became liabilities, instead of assets. Military opinion was at sea, finding many of its preconceptions of the value of the defensive demolished.

The Marne campaign was thus fought along the old lines of open warfare. It was decided as the Napoleonic campaigns or the elder Moltke's campaigns were decided—by manœuvring and by field operations without shelter. The Marne campaign was, in a sense, a military anachronism. It was inevitable that modern armies should seek to protect themselves. If fixed fortifications above ground had become valueless the troops would have to dig in in the open, wherever they were. So the trench system, with all its elaborations, was evolved.

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This revolution in field tactics was to have the effect of immobilizing war on the West Front for the next three years. But the Germans were to benefit from this immobilization much more largely than the Allies. The change came just as the Germans were ready to drop the offensive in the West and to go east to recover the territory which Austria-Hungary had lost to the Russians.

The deadlock of trench warfare set in about December, 1914. In the West, where the strength of the combatants was becoming more and more equalized, the defensive gained enormously in power over the offensive. Open warfare was abolished and great battles were fought, with losses running into the tens of thousands, in which the gains of territory were measured not in miles, but in hundreds of yards.

The coming of trench warfare greatly strengthened the German grip on France. Having failed to take Paris in September and the Channel ports in October and November, the German High Command settled down to a defensive which lasted, except for the Verdun episode, until March, 1918. It was the obvious policy of the Germans to hold fast in the West while solidifying their power in the East. They could do this with a minimum expenditure of effort in France and Belgium, because of the vast defence systems which they



constructed—mostly through the enforced labour of prisoners. Against these great barriers the French and British armies beat for three years without making anything like a serious breach in them. It was “nibbling” on a grand scale. But the cost was always out of proportion to the results. The Germans had the man power, the artillery, the machine guns, and the strategic reserves to defend their Western lines, and at the same time they had sufficient strength to overrun Galicia, Poland, Courland, Bukowina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Rumania and to deal the finishing blow to the toppling Russian giant.

There could be no genuine deadlock on the Eastern Front. The necessary solidity on the part of the defence was lacking on that side. The enormously superior German artillery could breach the enemy lines at any point and then restore relatively open warfare. The heaviest Allied artillery concentrations in France and Belgium made only dents here and there in the German defences. But, relying chiefly on their heavy guns, the Germans could clear hostile territory in the East with almost as much ease as in the days before the intervention of rigid positional warfare.

In still another important development of modern war fortune was kind to the Germans. They had built great hopes on the Zeppelin. It disappointed

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them; for the dirigible as a weapon of offence was one of the absolute failures of the war. But the U-boat surpassed all expectations. It was exploited to an extent which revolutionized warfare at sea. It was one of the greatest military "finds" of the war, outclassing in effectiveness the Skoda howitzer and the fifty-mile super-cannon, and almost rivalling in destructiveness the bombing airplane.

Within a week from the outbreak of hostilities the German navy was practically driven from the ocean. The high sea fleet was interned at the German naval bases, issuing infrequently on raids and only twice venturing a real engagement with the British. The Asiatic squadron remained at large in the Pacific for several months, defeating an inferior British squadron off the Chilean coast, and subsequently, after entering the South Atlantic, being itself destroyed by a superior British squadron off the Falkland Islands. A few remaining light cruisers, including the famous *Emden*, were gradually rounded up in the ends of the earth.

German sea power seemed to have vanished. But what the German cruiser could no longer do on the surface of the waters the U-boat quickly learned to do under them. Before the war the U-boat was merely a promising experiment. Few naval authorities had much faith in its future. It was constructed primarily

as an engine of coast defence, supplementing mines and land batteries. The cruising radius of most of the submarines built before 1914 was small, and the speed attained, either on the surface or under it, was so low that the U-boat seemed condemned to operate within a narrow range along the coasts which it protected.

Admiral Sir Percy Scott was the only British expert with imagination enough to realize the great offensive power bottled up in the submarine. Just before the war he wrote some articles in the *London Times* in which he predicted that if war came battleships would have to be locked up in harbours behind booms to prevent their being torpedoed by U-boats. He believed that the spirit of invention, which is mothered by necessity, would, under war conditions, soon make the submarine seaworthy and enormously dangerous, just as the *Monitor* and the ironclad *Merrimac* sprang suddenly into being in the American Civil War.

Sir Percy Scott was laughed at by the naval bureaucrats. But he was right. Within two or three years he saw the British battleships shepherded in bays of refuge about the Northern Scottish Islands, whence they issued only under the closest guard of sweepers and destroyers. But in his wildest speculations he had never prophesied the development of a U-boat which should carry 6-inch guns for surface fighting

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purposes and should not only patrol the British Isles and the coasts of France and Spain but should cross and recross the Atlantic with ease. That a submarine with a base at Kiel or Wilhelmshaven should sink merchant ships off Barnegat Bay or the Virginia Capes seemed as incredible in 1914 as that German coast guns should bombard Edinburgh or London.

Germany, therefore, found herself possessed in the U-boat of more than an equivalent in offensive sea power for what she had lost in her marooned surface navy. Until experience began to furnish the enemy surface fleets with an adequate defence the submarine made life miserable for them. The appearance of a single U-boat in the Ægean Sea in the summer of 1915 compelled the withdrawal of the Allied warships which were co-operating in the Gallipoli campaign. From 1915 to 1918 Allied operations in the Near East were greatly hampered by the submarine threat. French and British military effort was thereby localized to Belgium and France, where Germany needed most to localize it. The incidental warfare on Allied shipping was also a grave strain on Allied commerce and transportation.

Germany could have conformed her U-boat activities to the accepted rules of warfare at sea and still have derived an immense advantage from them. She

did, in fact, live up, pretty closely, to the international code in her campaign of 1918 against shipping on the American coast. But the spirit of excess and frightfulness was in her blood. Because Great Britain set up a cruiser cordon blockade, which infringed on existing neutral property rights, Germany tried to set up a "submarine blockade," which abolished the safeguards hitherto thrown about the lives of neutrals and non-combatants.

Yet even in this misguided venture fortune was still constant to the Kaiser. The sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915, ought to have led promptly to war with the United States. The American Government had stated its position in the note of warning sent to Berlin on February 12, 1915. But when the Kaiser did what he had been told he would be held to "strict accountability" for doing and refused to disavow his crime, the United States Government not only avoided declaring war, but ostentatiously refused to prepare for war. A gigantic blunder in German military policy brought no evil consequences. On the contrary, it helped Germany to intimidate the other maritime neutrals; for Holland, Spain, and the Scandinavian states could not be expected to break with Berlin on an issue which had not caused a severance of relations between Berlin and Washington.

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Iniquity, so long as it was German iniquity, seemed to wax and prosper. For two years American complacency and unpreparedness continued. We were "kept out of war." And we should probably have been "kept out of war" to the end if German folly, aggravated by too easy prosperity, had not finally resolved to treat the United States as a practically negligible military quantity.

This was the monumental blunder of German strategy. The United States was, in fact, capable of being converted within a short time into the most powerful military nation in the world. But the infatuated German High Command couldn't see that. A competent general staff should have known that the unrestricted submarine campaign was, from the military point of view, only a piece of window dressing. It could not bring victory. And dragging the United States by the ears into the war was bound to make victory for Germany impossible.

Germany had the war nearly won in January, 1917. Her long streak of good fortune was about to culminate in the Russian revolution. But she was drunk with success. She forgot caution. She sacrificed substance to shadow. Less than ever did she comprehend the world about her or the true objects of her own strategy. She could no longer understand the great poet of her era of intellectual clarity and modesty:

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*Nicht einen sah ich fröhlich enden  
Auf den mit immer vollen Händen  
Die Götter ihre Gaben streuen.*

[I never saw any one come to a happy end on whom the gods showered their gifts from heaped-up hands.]

Germany should have sent to the madhouse the leaders, who wanted, in the winter of 1916-17, to run amuck with the submarine. Instead, she acclaimed them as military geniuses—thus writing her own doom.

## CHAPTER IV

### SEA POWER IN THE WAR

SEA power did not win the World War. Yet the misuse of sea power lost it. This is a paradox which has troubled the extreme partisans of the Mahan theory. Mahan's contentions were vindicated, but in an inverse sense.

Sea power such as Germany had proved a millstone around her neck. It confused her strategy. It tempted her away from her safe and natural field of military effort. The continent of Europe was her true terrain, just as it was Napoleon's. Speaking broadly, she would have been better off in a military sense if she had had no navy.

"Germany's future lies on the sea," said William II in one of his expansive and vainglorious moments. No prophecy could have been more inept. No policy could be more dangerous for Germany than one which committed her to an effort to challenge Great Britain's mastery of the ocean. Germany's geographical position was an ideal one for conquests on land—for terri-



torial expansion east and south. But it was almost prohibitive of sea empire.

Germany had risen to the status of the first military power in Europe without the aid of a navy. Bismarck, Moltke, and the generation which vanquished Austria and France and created the Empire would not have known what to do with a high seas fleet. They would have looked on it as a superfluity and an encumbrance.

The illusion of German sea power took root in the brains of the post-Bismarckians. The Great Chancellor always trod the solid ground. He cared nothing for oversea colonies. He encouraged France to go into Tunis in 1881. He was glad to see the French committed to a policy of colonial expansion in Northern Africa. He believed that the acquisition of Tunis would help to reconcile France to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. He also foresaw that the extension of French power on the southern coast of the Mediterranean would incense Italy and drive her into an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. But for himself he coveted no colonial establishments—no “place in the sun” for Germany beyond the limits of the European continent.

William II brusquely elbowed Bismarck off the stage and broke melodramatically with all the Bismarckian traditions. With a showman's instincts he

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turned to new ideas of imperial policy. Sea power was one of these. Germany was to enter the race for overseas trade and dominions. She was to have a great merchant marine, a great navy, and new found African and Asiatic colonies.

German industry, making enormous strides under the protection of a semi-socialized government, responded eagerly to the new foreign programme. Germany, producing cheaply, had goods to sell, and a subsidized German merchant marine sprang up to carry them to all parts of the world. Dependencies were acquired in regions not yet pre-empted by other colonizing powers. The German flag was raised over the Cameroons, German West Africa, Togoland, German East Africa, New Guinea, Samoa, Kiaochau, and the Marshall Islands. France was badgered into surrendering a part of French West Africa in return for a quitclaim in Morocco. The creation of a modern navy paralleled the rapid and profitable development of the two great German sea transportation companies—the Hamburg-American and North German Lloyd.

What the Kaiser and his advisers could not see was that overseas expansion ran counter to true German military policy. If Germany was going to pursue the Prussian tradition of military conquest, her energies should have been concentrated for use along the lines

of least resistance. Her natural enemies were France and Russia. Eastern and Middle Europe were marked out by nature for Teuton exploitation. To seek power and territory beyond the seas was only to give unnecessary hostages to fortune. For Germany could not expect to become a great colonizing nation, to maintain a world-wide carrying trade, and, above all, to build a first class navy, without exciting the distrust and hostility of Great Britain. And in a European war in which Great Britain sided with Germany's enemies the latter's colonies would fall, her foreign trade would be suppressed, and her navy would be either blockaded or extinguished.

Oversea expansion could not but weaken Germany's military position. It necessarily introduced and stimulated pacifist tendencies within a militaristic state. The more intelligent and practical leaders in the up-building of the German merchant marine could not but realize that Germany's future on the seas depended absolutely on the retention of British goodwill and on the preservation of peace.

In a letter written in December, 1917, by Albert Ballin, of the Hamburg-American Company, the greatest figure in the German shipping world, to Dr. Rathenau, the president of the General Electric Company and one of the leading German industrialists, a candid

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admission is made of the complete dependence of German overseas trade before the war on the favour of Great Britain. Says Mr. Ballin, who died just before the end of the war, having first lost the favour of his former friend and patron, the Kaiser:

More than ever I must admit that every increase in our wealth, every success of our enterprises in the years preceding the war, were due to our relations with the British Empire. Its ports, its dominions, and its colonies were largely opened to our fleets and our merchants. I have often been astonished at that generosity, which I even regarded as folly. Can one suppose that we shall ever restore those old relations? . . .

We aspire to recover our overseas commerce. On that prospect we build the fondest hopes. But how can we recover it in the face of Anglo-Saxon unity, which hates, and ought to hate, our very presence? Do our imbeciles of chauvinists take account of the fact that we haven't even a port where our ships can dock or where they can receive a friendly greeting?

Dover, Falmouth, and Southampton, Gibraltar, Malta, and Alexandria, Aden, the Persian Gulf, Bombay, Colombo, Singapore, and Hongkong—what are they? English arsenals, naval bases, coaling stations, docks where we shall not even dare to show our faces, if England forbids us to do so.

It is the same all around the continent of Africa. It is the same in the West Indies. It is the same in the Pacific. We have not a single coaling station, not a single dock, where we can repair our vessels.

Ballin realized—long after it was too late—that German sea power had been only a peace-time fiction—a matter of indulgence on the part of Great Britain. The British were exceedingly tolerant of German rivalry. This “folly,” as Ballin called it, was not due to any real consideration for Germany. It was only a phase of British self-complacency. The average British merchant had no aversion to using German freight carriers. He was willing to buy cheaper German goods and sell them at home and abroad under his own labels. There was no consciousness at all in Great Britain of a “German peril.” The British public still put implicit faith in the diplomacy of Beaconsfield, the cardinal principle of which was to combat the influence and ambitions of Russia. German ambitions were not taken seriously.

The self-deception of many British statesmen about German purposes was extraordinary. Even down to August, 1914, leaders like Lord Haldane and Sir Edward Grey seemed unable to imagine that Germany would not only provoke a European war, but would draw Great Britain into it. It was because of this singular fatuity that the British had to enter the war so deplorably unprepared.

The Kaiser and his advisers may have had some cause to think that British politicians would continue

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complacent while Germany was building up a powerful navy in addition to a prosperous merchant marine. But they misread history and misjudged the British character when they assumed that Great Britain would ever tolerate the use of the German navy to destroy the French fleet and to seize the French Channel ports. Such a challenge to their own naval superiority in Western European waters the British people would certainly meet, whatever their pacifist politicians thought. So the creation of a German navy strong enough to destroy French sea power inevitably paved the way to war with Great Britain.

If Germany intended to be a real sea power she would therefore have to count on locking horns, sooner or later, with the British. The officers of the German fleet knew this. They had their toast, "Der Tag," meaning the day when they expected to take Great Britain's measure on the seas. That sort of thing was magnificently impudent. But it was not war. A competent general staff would have vetoed as fantastic and suicidal the proposition to take on Great Britain as an additional enemy. And such a veto should have stood, whatever its effect on the Kaiser's inflated naval and colonial programme.

But after the elder Moltke's death German military policy became confused and unstable. The Kaiser's

erratic influence was all-pervasive. He was an enthusiastic yachtsman. He was a big stockholder in the Hamburg-American and North German Lloyd companies. He wanted to create a tinsel colonial empire. He was eager to pose as war lord on the quarter-decks of battleships as well as at the head of divisions and armies. There is nothing to show that the General Staff tried seriously to dissuade him from his mad adventure on the high seas—an adventure which could only dissipate German resources and weaken Germany's highly advantageous military position.

The military leaders humoured the whims of the All Highest, whether from choice or from necessity.

Within the High Command, as within every other governmental body, there was no true liberty of opinion. Only as late as 1917 did German military experts begin to feel a little freedom in discussing the gigantic blunder of German naval policy. In his *Deductions from the World War*, published in that year of German military good fortune, Lieutenant-General Baron Freytag-Loringhoven, deputy chief of the German General Staff, indulges in these cautiously sceptical reflections:

This is not the place to examine how far, in view of the all too rapid growth of her trade, world politics and world economics may have been premature

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in the case of Germany, inasmuch as our continental position was still by no means assured. Here Rancke's words are applicable: "Who can control circumstances, calculate future events, govern the surging of the elements?"

This is a veiled way of saying that William II's venture in sea power was a disastrous misjudgment. Freytag-Loringhoven also says:

As the result of our geographical position it will always remain our task to form a just estimate of the opposing demands of world economics in the narrower sense and of oversea and continental politics.

But this author, characteristically obsequious, diplomatically gilds the pill by adding:

The World War affords incontrovertible proof that Germany must for all time to come maintain her claim to sea power. We need not at present discuss by what means this aim is to be achieved.

Empty and melancholy words! Hardly more than a year after they were written the greater part of the German high seas fleet was steaming across the North Sea to surrender to the Allies, and the German U-boats, the only units in the German navy which were able to keep the seas and to inflict real losses on the enemy, were being turned over *en masse* to the victors. The



German navy struck its flag in November, 1918, without even fighting to save appearances. It was a fitting end to a preposterous military experiment.

But no one in Germany ever foresaw the tragic ceremony off the Firth of Forth. The strategists of the General Staff, who should have subordinated everything to securing Germany's Continental position, were silent while Admiral Tirpitz pursued for two decades or more his task of fitting Germany for that "future" on the seas of which William II had boasted.

Tirpitz was, in a military sense, Germany's chief evil genius. A promoter and politician rather than a seaman, he worked for his own glorification and that of his caste. He won the confidence of the pan-Germans and the Junkers who saw in his schemes only another easy way of boosting German military expenditures. He spent millions of marks organizing navy leagues in the interior of the empire and carrying back-district delegations to Hamburg and Bremen, where they were fêted and infected with the big navy propaganda. He had the support of the big industrials and the exporting interests and became in time one of the "uncrowned kings" of the Prussian state, like Krupp, Thyssen, Heydebrand, Ballin, and Rathenau.

Opinionated, imperious, and fertile in intrigue, he bestrode Germany like an uncouth colossus. A

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neutral traveller gave this glimpse of him in the latter part of the war. A train overcrowded with women, children, and wounded soldiers is travelling from one German town to another. The disabled and suffering pack the compartments and the aisles. At one stopping place a spacious, locked compartment is opened and Tirpitz issues alone—obese, whiskered, gorgeously uniformed, and haughtily rigid. What was the comfort of any one else on that train compared with his comfort?

Tirpitz had his secret naval appropriations and his secret building programme. But there are no inviolable secrets in a matter like naval construction. The German navy, as planned by him, was soon to overtake and pass every other navy, except Great Britain's. The British Government remained apathetic for a long time. But the point was eventually reached when the British standard of naval superiority—a fleet equal to that of any two other powers—was threatened by German construction.

Great Britain finally protested and began negotiations with Germany for a mutual limitation of building programmes. The German Admiralty backed and filled, professing innocence of any intention to challenge British sea power. But no limitation agreement was ever reached. Thereafter Great Britain and Germany became potential enemies. However tinged with

pacifism the Asquith-Haldane-Grey government might be, however slight attention it might pay to Lord Roberts's appeals for military preparation, British distrust of German naval ambitions had been aroused. Tirpitz had made it impossible for Great Britain to remain a spectator in any European war which Germany should precipitate.

German indignation when Great Britain joined France and Russia in 1914 was therefore petulant and insincere. The violation of Belgian neutrality furnished the Asquith government with a welcome moral issue on which to reverse its own policy of sluggish non-concern. Yet even without the Belgian perfidy Great Britain would have been obliged to enter the war. Her own security compelled her to accept the opportunity offered to end the growing menace of German naval power.

But Tirpitz was to involve Germany in still more costly military blunders. His surface fleet was swept from the ocean in the first months of the war. He found accidentally in the submarine an offensive weapon worth vastly more than his battleships and cruisers. Yet the use he made of the U-boat was senseless and disastrous. Smarting at the failure of his surface vessels to hold the seas, he resolved to drive all other surface shipping off them. It was a grandiose idea.

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Had Tirpitz succeeded he would have won the war. He would have won the war equally if he had been able to carry through his original plan to create a surface navy strong enough to cope with Great Britain's.

But both these ideas were phantasms. And the failure to realize the second entailed more fatal consequences than the failure to realize the first. Germany still had a chance to win a European war after Great Britain had joined France and Russia. But she had no chance at all to win a world war into which she had dogged the United States by persisting in her unrestricted U-boat operations. Tirpitz had his sufficient warning of the perils of high sea murder when he sank the *Lusitania* and raised a moral and legal issue with the United States. But nothing could deter him. He had become more than ever a visionary and a gambler. So, after contemptuously parleying for nearly two years with Washington, he began a war of piracy against all neutral shipping. This madness arrayed against Germany a power even more formidable than Great Britain. When reluctant America was converted into a belligerent Germany's last chance of victory disappeared.

The German public was slow to recognize the fatal effects of Tirpitz's naval policy. But long before the end of the war the Kaiser found it advisable to make a

show of sacrificing him to popular discontent. He was sidetracked, though the continuing effects of his blunders could not be sidetracked.

Even naval officers and critics turned against him. Captain Persius was the fairest and most competent of the German writers on naval affairs. He had been a booster of the big navy idea and of unrestricted submarine warfare. But he was finally disillusioned enough to write in the *Berliner Tageblatt*:

Herr von Tirpitz may be assured that all attempts to cover over his guilt will miserably fail. The German people will some day have a clear understanding of the situation, and then it will realize that the phrase which Kammerherr von Oldenburg-Janutschau used with reference to Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg applies still better to Herr von Tirpitz: "I believe that never has a minister done his country a graver injury than he."

Germany lost the war, therefore, because she had handicapped herself with naval power and then misemployed it. Had she had no navy or only a moderate sized coast defence navy she might not have had to fight Great Britain at all. She certainly would never have had to fight the United States. And since her true field of conquest was in Eastern and South-eastern Europe, the lack of a navy could have made no difference whatever in her offensive strength.

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Her case fell outside the scope of Admiral Mahan's theory that sea power is the necessary adjunct of empire. She needed merely enough warships to keep control of the Baltic and to assist her land operations against the Baltic provinces, Finland, and the Petrograd district. The Baltic was closed by mines against the British fleet. The Black Sea was closed by the Dardanelles forts. Germany could therefore proceed in the East without any fear of hostile interference from Allied sea power.

Many writers have asserted that Allied sea power defeated Germany. But this claim entirely overlooks what the Germans went out of their way to do to defeat themselves. It is true that control of the sea made possible the transportation of the American armies to France; and American man power turned the scale in land fighting against Germany. But Germany would never have been obliged to fight the United States if she had had the sagacity to pursue a military policy dictated by her own strategical necessities and limitations.

The blockade, conducted with ever-increasing rigour, greatly hampered the Teuton allies. But they had no reason to expect anything different. And they were in nothing like the desperate situation in which the Confederate States found themselves from 1861 to

1865. Germany was self-supporting, so far as the manufacture of war material was concerned. She had enough for her purposes. There was a shortage in food after 1915. But the Teuton peoples were never near the starvation point. The armies were always sufficiently supplied and lost nothing in fighting power by reason of shortened rations. And Germany constantly extended her territorial conquests, finally getting possession of the rich grain lands of Rumania and the Ukraine. —

Reports of alarming food shortages in the Central States filled the Allied press in 1915, 1916, and 1917. They were gross exaggerations, intended to keep up the spirit of the Allied publics. After 1917 readers ceased to put any faith in them. Hunger would not have brought Germany to her knees in the fall of 1918 or broken the Teuton coalition if American man power had not arrived in Europe and the German armies had not been decisively beaten in Champagne, Picardy, Artois, and Flanders.

The Allied blockade failed to starve Germany into submission, although it caused the enemy much annoyance and discomfort. Allied sea power was also unequal in preventing the attainment of what should have been Germany's primary strategical aim. That was the conquest and absorption of Russia.

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The Allied fleets faltered at the Dardanelles in March, 1915. The Black Sea was never entered by French and British warships until after the armistice was signed.

Control of the sea enabled the Allies to deliver war material to the Russian armies through Kola, Archangel, and Vladivostok. But the difficulties of land transportation from these ports to the eastern fighting front had still to be overcome. They were successfully overcome only for a short period in 1916.

Freytag-Loringhoven says very justly of the military effects of the blockade:

The consequences of the blockade to which the Central Powers were subjected made themselves felt at once. Although we have succeeded by our own might in developing and carrying on our economic life during the war, none the less the disadvantages of our economic position in the world have made themselves felt all the time. They alone explain the fact that new opportunities of resistance constantly revealed themselves to our opponents because the sea was open to them, and that victories which formerly would have been absolutely decisive and the conquest of whole kingdoms still brought us no nearer to peace. Thus was Russia able to recover from the severe defeats of the summer of 1915, and to attack once more in the following year with newly equipped armies.

But Brusiloff's Galician offensive of 1916 was the last flash in the pan of Russian fighting power. Allied



control of the sea could not check Russian disintegration. It could not prevent the elimination of Russia as a belligerent. And to hold Russia in line was the chief aim of Entente strategy, until the United States came in to replace Russia. Sea power was an important contributing element to Allied strength. But it could never have decided the war in the Entente's favour if the war had retained its strictly European character.

The development of the submarine greatly complicated the problem of the sea strategists. They brought their influence to bear at the Paris peace conference to have a ban put on the use of the U-boats. But it would be just as reasonable to put a prohibition on the use of long distance guns of the "Big Bertha" type, or of bombing airplanes. All these instruments of destruction render more or less precarious the guarantees thrown about the lives of non-combatants by the rules of civilized war as they existed before 1914. But the character of war itself has changed. It has become more terrible. It has now been so intensified as to obscure the old distinctions between combatants and non-combatants. Armies no longer fight armies; nations fight nations.

If wars are to continue it would be against human nature and against all military experience to expect

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belligerents to forego the use of any of the means of destroying the power of the enemy which this war has developed. So the U-boats, banned or not, will undoubtedly remain a potentially disturbing factor in naval warfare. The war's effects on sea power were in a sense more revolutionary than its effects on land power. The weaker sea powers were benefited, relatively, at the expense of the stronger.

But Germany entered the war with no clear idea of using the strength of her U-boat squadrons as an offset to the weakness of her surface fleet. The development of the submarine was an afterthought. Tirpitz lavished hundreds of millions of marks on battleships and battle cruisers. With these he intended to make the North Sea a German lake—justifying the nomenclature of the old geographers, who used to call it the German Ocean.

He overlooked the fact that in surface sea fighting under modern conditions inferiority is fatal. A weaker army, favoured by accidents of position, may easily defeat a stronger army. But on the sea there is no advantage of position. The inferior squadron or fleet rarely wins and is always lucky to escape destruction. Off Jutland the German navy was clearly beaten, though low visibility conditions and Admiral Jellicoe's caution allowed it to slink back to port. Its next appearance in the open was for the purpose of surrendering.

Tirpitz had builded for defeat, not for victory. His naval policy was radically wrong. Sea power is a long, slow growth. And of all the belligerent nations of the first rank Germany was the least qualified in a military sense to engage in a war at sea. Her future lay elsewhere. And she would probably have made it secure if she had only followed from the beginning the modest but adequate naval policy of Austria-Hungary, her lightly esteemed neighbour and ally.

## CHAPTER V

### DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN STRATEGY

THE Great War of 1914-18 demolished all precedents. It resulted in the most stupendous outpouring of human energy ever known. All the standards by which military and economic effort had been measured in the past suddenly became obsolete.

It was a commonplace among financiers before the war began that no European conflict could last more than twelve months without bankrupting the belligerents. International finance was supposed to hold the purse strings of all governments, and was expected to call a halt in time on ruinous war expenditures.

But in their wildest dreams the financial experts had never sensed what modern industrial nations can do when they plunge into war. The two belligerent groups put 50,000,000 men in the field and spent over \$250,000,000,000 for war purposes. Once the pent-up resources of the countries at war were unleashed all thought of anything short of victory or exhaustion was abandoned. The United States was in the war

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only a little more than eighteen months. Yet in that period it spent or contracted to spend \$55,000,000,000, including \$10,000,000,000 loaned to its Allies. The total American Civil War debt was only about \$3,000,000,000.

Economically and financially, the war fought itself. It soon got beyond control of those who may have believed in the beginning that they would be able to direct it or to set bounds to it. It was too vast an enterprise to be shaped by any government or group of governments. It plunged along to its conclusion in its own ponderous way, smashing all forecasts and calculations.

This is true to a large extent of the military conduct of the war as well as of its economic conduct. No General Staff was prepared for what actually happened when the huge armies of the twentieth century—nations under arms, in reality—clashed in the field under revolutionized conditions of warfare. No General Staff fought the war as it had planned to fight it. After the first two months none even saw very clearly what was ahead. By reason of its immensity, the war mastered the strategists and developed its own strategy. Both tactically and strategically it had to find itself.

Germany was immensely better prepared for the struggle than her opponents were. She was able to

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seize the offensive at the outset, and, from the point of view of grand strategy, she retained it until the contest was in its last stages. As the aggressor and as the most highly organized military state in Europe, she should have been able, if any belligerent was, to reduce her strategy to the simplest and clearest terms. Having freedom of action, interior lines, and a choice of operating fronts, she might reasonably have been expected to formulate and pursue a sharply defined and consistent military policy.

Yet, as a matter of fact, the most striking feature of German strategy throughout the war was its lack of clarity and unification. German conceptions were confused by the huge initial failure at the Marne. The effects of that confusion were never eradicated.

It was fairly clear after the Marne and Flanders campaigns of 1914 that German victory was not to be achieved in the West. The forces there were too evenly balanced. The speedy introduction of trench warfare also tended to enforce a condition of barren deadlock on the Western Front. Germany's true field of military exploitation therefore lay in the East. Circumstances drove her there in the spring of 1915. Her easiest and most fruitful victories were won there. The opening up of Russia, Rumania, Serbia, the Caucasus, and Persia offered her a splendid opportunity

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to offset the economic injury done her by the Allied Blockade.

But she would not pursue her Eastern campaigns to their logical conclusion, contenting herself at the same time with a strict defensive in the West. Her General Staff seemed unable to throw off the spell of the elder Moltke's achievements in 1870-71. What he had done the younger Moltke, Falkenhayn, and Ludendorff all hankered to do. The first failed at the Marne in 1914; the second failed at Verdun in 1916; the third failed at the Marne in 1918.

Moltke the Younger was less blameworthy than the others. He had no opportunity to amend his theories in the light of experience. The other two had ample opportunity to do so. But, one and all, they sought to make the conduct of the war conform to fixed, pre-conceived strategic notions instead of letting their strategy be determined by forces and circumstances disclosing themselves as the struggle progressed. Germany never developed a military leader who was in the true sense an opportunist. And in an inexact and problematical art like war opportunism is the outlet of genius.

The great fault of the German military mind is its rigidity. It cannot readjust itself readily to unforeseen conditions. It cannot reverse itself with sup-

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pleness when a fundamental misconception has to be rectified. Thus in this war the German military leaders were never able to rid themselves of their fatal delusions about the value of German sea power and the necessity of a victorious offensive in the West.

What they demanded was an orientation with which they were familiar—a policy bequeathed to them by some supposed military superman like the elder Moltke or Schlieffen or Tirpitz, and stamped with the seal of his oracular authority. The supreme test of a military operation in German eyes is not whether it was adapted to the actual requirements or potentialities of a situation, but whether it was or was not executed according to specifications prepared long in advance—in other words, whether it was or was not what the German military writers call *planmässig*. And this passion for adhering to routine, to the tradition of General Staff infallibility, and the formulas of the past—manifested tactically in a slavish employment of close formation infantry attacks all through the earlier period of the war—again and again prevented Germany from reaping the full advantages of her strategical freedom and of her unchallenged superiority on the Eastern Front.

Germany began the war, of course, with an all-embracing scheme of strategy. The German public had



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long accepted the legend of the elder Moltke's sending word to General Staff Headquarters in Berlin when France was tricked into declaring war on Germany in 1870: "Open drawer so and so." That legend had a basis of truth. Moltke the Elder had carefully planned the invasion of Alsace-Lorraine, and under the simpler conditions of warfare which existed in 1870 he was able to conduct his campaign with an appearance of marvellous prevision. He defeated Bazaine and MacMahon according to schedule, captured their armies, and reduced France to helplessness.

Moltke the Younger, when Germany declared war on France in 1914, may also have given orders to open a similar drawer in one of the General Staff's cabinets. But he was not to have his way so easily with France. After going on swimmingly for five weeks his campaign for Paris collapsed. His armies were defeated, through gross strategical blunders at the battle of the Marne. After a short secondary campaign in Flanders, which also failed in the large sense, the Germans were thrown back on the defensive on the Western Front—a defensive which was to last, except for the Verdun episode, from December, 1914, until March, 1918. All German strategical preconceptions were thus shattered before the war had fairly begun.

After the First Marne there was a period of extra-

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ordinary depression at German Grand Headquarters. Just after the conclusion of the armistice the former Crown Prince of Prussia was reported as saying that in his opinion the Marne ended Germany's hopes of victory. That is only after-the-event wisdom—and a poor quality of it in the bargain. Germany came much nearer winning the war on many later occasions than she did at the culminating moment of her first rush into France.

The depression among the German leaders was psychological. They saw a great military gamble go wrong when, on the basis of their fallacious deductions from the elder Moltke's victory over the French in 1870, it should have been successful. They were amazed and disheartened. They tried to cover over their defeat with childish misrepresentations. They excised all reference to the Marne from their communiqués. They refused to face open-mindedly the results of the Marne campaign.

Yet, on its face, the Marne was a warning that the fundamental conception of German military policy was unsound. The German Staff, still living in glorious memories of 1870-71, had grossly undervalued the power of France. It had had to pay a disconcerting penalty for that error. Lieutenant General Baron Freytag-Loringhoven admitted the truth in 1917 when

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he wrote: "The German offensive at the beginning of September, 1914, was not powerful enough to overthrow the enemy." But if the Germans could not hope to overthrow the enemy in September, 1914, when Germany's completer preparedness told more heavily in her favour than it could ever tell again, what reasonable hope of victory lay in a continuation of the Western offensive?

The fundamental idea of German military policy—the crushing of France—having proved illusory, a soldier of the quality of Frederick the Great, or Napoleon or the elder Moltke would have discarded it. But Germany had no such soldier. The Kaiser was a military incompetent. Worse than that, he was surrounded by generals without genius. He could remove the younger Moltke. But he could replace him only with a Falkenhayn, a Hindenburg, or a Ludendorff.

Dr. Mühlön says that the younger Moltke had no responsibility for the plan of operations which went to wreck at the Marne. Freytag-Loringhoven says the same thing. The plan was a legacy from the days of Count Schlieffen, the elder Moltke's successor as Chief of the General Staff.

Count Schlieffen was the chief proponent in Germany of the strategy of "double envelopment." He wrote a work called *Cannæ*, in which he illustrated from Han-

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nibal's victory the working out of his own theories. Schlieffen believed in retaining the enemy's centre, or even yielding to him a little there, while outflanking and enclosing him on both wings. A victory of the Cannæ type, he held, was the only sort which would ensure the annihilation of an opponent.

Foch illustrated the Cannæ theory tactically and locally at the second battle of the Marne, when he encouraged the Germans to push south of the river, between Château-Thierry and Dormans, and also to move up the Marne Valley toward Epernay, while he was preparing to strike their right wing between Château-Thierry and Soissons and their left wing between Dormans and Rheims. But, of course, Foch had no idea of enveloping either the German right wing or the German left wing. He was trying to crush the Marne salient by a breaking through operation on the west side.

Freytag-Loringhoven claims that the Germans won a Cannæ victory over the Russians at Tannenberg in 1914, and over the Rumanians at Hermannstadt in 1916. But they never realized Count Schlieffen's pet idea in the West. By coming south through Belgium in August, 1914, the younger Moltke hoped to envelop the French left wing east of Paris. His simultaneous operation on the Nancy front was intended to shake

loose and envelop the French right wing, resting on the Lorraine border. Then the French armies would have had to retreat in disorder south of the Seine and west of the Meuse. Paris would have fallen and all the eastern frontier would have been cleared.

But through a fatal miscalculation of the strength and fighting quality of the French armies all these plans went awry. Instead of enveloping the French left to the east of Paris, the German armies in that region were themselves threatened with envelopment by Maunoury's flanking movement out of the capital. Kluck saved the German western armies by a quick shift of front. But a German retreat to the Aisne had become inevitable. Meanwhile the attack on Nancy had ended in a fiasco.

Schlieffen's strategy broke down completely. This was not the younger Moltke's fault, although he was quickly made the Kaiser's scapegoat. He suffered for the shortcomings of others.

Yet if his dismissal had been coincident with a radical change in German military policy, it would have been entirely justified. It would have indicated that there were minds at German headquarters capable of reading the signs in the military firmament.

The Marne campaign, and the Flanders campaign which supplemented it, both proved that Germany

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had little hope of conquering France. Germany was not strong enough in 1914, 1915, 1916, or 1917 to win the war on the Western Front. Possibly she might have forced a draw there in 1918, after Russia's disappearance, if she had not wantonly dragged the United States in as a belligerent. To a really competent grand strategist it should have been clear even at the end of 1914 that there could be no Cannæ in the West. The part of wisdom, therefore, for the Germans was to hold fast to Belgium and conquered Northern France and pin the French and British down there to a barren war of positions, while bending every energy to eliminating Russia and establishing a Teuton overlordship of Middle and Eastern Europe.

Germany did go east in the spring of 1915. But she went more from compulsion than from choice. The German plan of operations on the Eastern Front had also gone to wreck. Moltke the Elder has told us that in 1870, when there was some reason at the outset of the war to fear Austrian co-operation with France, he had decided to keep only a few second-line army corps in Saxony and Silesia, to hold off the Austrian armies, while seeking a decision in Alsace-Lorraine. So in 1914 the German High Command sent only a few hundred thousand men into East Prussia to contain the northern Russian armies. To Austria-Hungary

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was confided the task of an offensive into Poland which should isolate Warsaw and pin the southern Russian armies to the line of Brest-Litovsk—the main Russian line of mobilization.

But Russia got into the war too quickly. East Prussia was invaded. The Austro-Hungarian armies were routed in Eastern Galicia, lost Lemberg and the line of the San, and were driven at many points beyond the Carpathians. Hindenburg crushed the Russians at the battle of Tannenberg, in August, 1914, ending the East Prussian invasion. But Austria-Hungary could not rally for many months from her first defeats. Hindenburg's two campaigns for Warsaw, in October and December, 1914, had failed. Przemyśl was lost in March, 1915. It was imperative that Germany should drop offensive operations in the West and go east to reckon with the Russians, who now stood almost at the gates of Cracow.

Turkey's entry into the war had also greatly extended Germany's military opportunities in the East. The barring of the Dardanelles and Turkey's successful defence of the Straits had dashed Allied expectations of connecting up the Russian and Western fronts. With almost no help from Germany Turkey had isolated Russia, thus insuring the latter's eventual collapse. But Turkey needed to be reinforced and to be

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supplied with munitions. A corridor from Berlin to Constantinople had to be cut through the Balkans.

Every military consideration now compelled a concentration of Germany's main effort in the East. So on May Day, 1915, Hindenburg and Mackensen began their great drive against the Russians in Galicia and Poland. In four months they had cleared Galicia, Poland, Courland, part of Lithuania, and all of Bukovina. Then Mackensen turned south. Bulgaria joined the Central Alliance. Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania were overrun, Rumania was cut off, and Turkey was linked up securely with the new German *Mittel-Europa*.

No other German campaign showed results comparable in a military and political sense with those of this one. In a single summer Germany had changed the face of Europe—and at a cost so small as to be almost negligible. She was on the true road to the only sort of empire which was within the scope of her military resources—towards a true solidification of her Continental position. By December, 1915, she was in a condition either to ask or to grant a peace assuring her supremacy in Europe.

Hindenburg, who had been the operating chief on the Eastern Front, became the idol of the German people. They hastened to erect huge wooden images of him and drive them full of gold and silver nails—a



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primitive Germanic method of deification. In this they obeyed a sound instinct. Hindenburg stood above all things for an Eastern military policy. His fame was the outgrowth of the natural trend of the war.

But the German military mind was unconvinced. Falkenhayn, Moltke's successor, was a Westerner by predilection. He conceived the idea of stabilizing the Eastern Front and turning west again. At Grand Headquarters the lure of Paris was still potent. All through the winter of 1915-16 Falkenhayn was busy preparing his "break through" on the Verdun front, intended to destroy the morale of the French and at the same time to anticipate and forestall the offensive on the Somme which the British were nearly ready to begin.

The Verdun campaign was an unrelieved failure. It cost Falkenhayn several hundred thousand casualties. It depleted his precious strategic reserve. It gave France a new sense of security, and it did not delay by a week the anticipated Allied offensive in Artois and Picardy.

Falkenhayn was disgraced, Hindenburg was promoted to be Chief of Staff, and Germany returned to a patient defensive in the West. For a second time the pressure of circumstances called Germany east.

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The defeat at Verdun had stirred the Russians to action. The Brusiloff offensive of 1916 was at hand and Rumania was showing signs of joining the Entente.

Brusiloff won some notable victories over the Austro-Hungarians in Volhynia, Galicia, and Bukowina. Tens of thousands of disaffected Czecho-Slovak and South Slav troops threw down their arms and surrendered to the Russians. Considerable territory was recovered. But when German reinforcements arrived the Russian armies were halted. It was Russia's last flash of offensive strength. Pacifist intrigues inside the government at Petrograd now began to aggravate the difficulties of the armies in the field.

Rumania came into the war in the fall of 1916—relying on Allied promises, which were never to be fulfilled. The Germans were prepared to crush this small, exposed Balkan state. A concentric attack from Transylvania, Serbia, and Bulgaria soon cleared all of Wallachia. Bucharest fell—hardly six weeks after war was declared.

Here again the military, political, and economic possibilities of an exploitation of the East Front were startlingly demonstrated. Germany could fight and win on that front almost with one hand tied behind her back. Rumania became a new source of food, oil, and other war supplies. And the vast, inert, ex-

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hausted Muscovite empire was now on the point of breaking up.

German grand strategy shone brightest during the first six or eight months of Hindenburg's tenure as Chief of Staff. He remained always by conviction an Easterner. He was satisfied to reap the advantages of the Russian and Balkan situations. He further emphasized Germany's proper defensive rôle in the West by planning and executing the highly successful strategical retirement of March, 1917, out of the Noyon salient. He constructed the massive Hindenburg line from La Fère to St. Quentin, past Cambrai, and then past Douai toward Lens. It was the line which he intended to hold—and which he did hold successfully all through 1917.

But Ludendorff had now begun to overshadow Hindenburg. The former was of the true rigid, ruthless, narrow-visioned German General Staff type. He was bitten with the idea of German invincibility. He sympathized with the world empire paranoia of Tirpitz and the extreme pan-Germans. He already pictured himself as leading the eventual German march on Paris.

So he let the East slip more and more out of his mind's eye. He coquetted with the rabid naval and Fatherland Party group, which was clamouring for a

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renewal of unrestricted submarine warfare. It was Ludendorff's influence which turned the scale in January, 1917, when Bethmann-Hollweg's programme of preventing war with the United States by concessions such as were embodied in the celebrated Suffolk note was discarded. He drove Bethmann-Hollweg out of office. He assented to the new blockade proclaimed by the Admiralty, which was in effect a notice to all neutral shipping to keep out of northern Atlantic and Mediterranean waters or be sunk on sight. He must therefore share with Tirpitz the responsibility for the fatal decision which turned Germany back from the path of victory. Imitating Falkenhayn, he again perverted German military policy and nullified the effects of all the imposing German successes on the Eastern Front.

The Russian revolution arrived. With dramatic swiftness the empire perished; the Duma government rose and fell; Kerensky succeeded and sanctioned the brief and ineffective Korniloff offensive in Bukowina and Galicia and then fell himself. Russia now disappeared as a military factor. Had Germany held off on her unrestricted submarine campaign she would practically have won the war by the end of 1917. Russia lay open for partition. As the farce-tragedy of Brest-Litovsk was to prove, no obstacle existed any

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longer to German penetration as far as the Urals, into the Caucasus and into Persia.

But the Germans were never able to consolidate their empire in the East. Ludendorff had loaded himself down with other burdens. Having dragged America into the war, it was now incumbent on him to go west and conquer Italy, France, and Great Britain before American man power should begin to flow across the Atlantic.

He struck at Italy first, winning, in November, 1917, the great victory of Caporetto—one of the completest of the war. Italy was thrown roughly back on the defensive, losing nearly all Venetia, about two hundred thousand prisoners, and probably more than one thousand guns. Only the approach of bad weather saved Venice. Italy didn't recover from this blow for many months.

Next came the great drive of 1918 in Northern France. On this Ludendorff staked everything that Germany had left. There is reason to think that Hindenburg dissented from his colleague's win-all-lose-all policy, and that William II was inclined to agree with Hindenburg.

It will always remain a question whether Germany did not still have a chance in the spring of 1918 to fight the war to a draw by standing on the defensive in

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France, while attempting to develop Finland, the Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic Provinces, and possibly even Rumania, Bessarabia, and the Crimea into military assets.

Certainly, if she had continued on the defensive Germany could not have lost the war in 1918—perhaps not in 1919. The Allies were bound to remain gravely handicapped so long as they continued to renounce the advantages of unity of command. And Allied unity of command would hardly have come if Ludendorff had not broken the British line west of St. Quentin in March, 1918, and nearly destroyed the British Fifth Army.

Ludendorff's offensive in France forced the selection of Foch as the Allied generalissimo and vastly accelerated the transportation of American troops to Europe. Without Foch and without the American reinforcement the Allies would probably have made little more progress on the Western Front in 1918 than they had made in 1917.

But Ludendorff was a dogmatist and a plunger. He insisted on having his way and had it. By his errors of tactics as well as of strategy he quickly wrecked the great German military establishment.

Yet long before the Second Marne German political and military obtuseness had fumbled away all chance of

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victory. The Germans never learned the lesson of the First Marne. They could have won their war in Eastern Europe. Instead, they wanted to win it on the sea and in Western Europe. What the First Marne, Verdun, and the first submarine campaign had already proved, the Second Marne and the second submarine campaign only proved over again. It was never within the scope of Teuton resources to conquer the world. And the resources which would have sufficed to conquer Eastern Europe were wasted in trying to reduce Paris and subjugate France.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEVELOPMENT OF ALLIED STRATEGY

GERMANY never achieved clarity in her strategy, although her true military policy was obvious. She had seized the offensive, and held on to it. Her geographical position offered her enormous advantages. She fought on interior lines. She enjoyed unity of command. Everything contributed to give her a free hand in a military way. Yet she could never fix her goal clearly in her mind's eye and move steadily toward it.

The case with the Allies was entirely different. Their geographical position was against them. They were strung out around the periphery of a vast circle. At the beginning of the war the British Isles, France, and Belgium constituted one Allied cluster in north-western Europe. Serbia and Montenegro—forming a second group—were isolated in the Balkans. Russia was cut off on the distant Eastern Front.

The northern sea passage to Russia through the Baltic was sealed by German mines in the Cattegat



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and the Danish Great Belt. The southern passage through the Dardanelles was blocked by Turkey. Only the precarious Arctic Ocean route remained open—and the almost prohibitive 'round-the-globe' connection through Vladivostok.

When Italy came into the war, in 1915, the Atlantic and Mediterranean fronts were partially linked up. But Italy had been a belligerent hardly six months when Serbia and Montenegro were overrun by the Germans. For more than two years thereafter the only secure footing left to the Allies in the Balkan peninsula was the intrenched camp of Salonica. In Asia there were minor Allied operating fronts in lower Palestine, in Mesopotamia, and in Armenia—all distinct and widely separated from one another. German communications radiated from the centre of the circle within which the Teuton Powers were beleaguered. Allied communications around the circumference were straggling and difficult to maintain.

The primary aim of Allied strategy was to connect the scattered exterior fronts and to co-ordinate the operations on them. If the Russian front from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea could be joined physically with the Balkan, Italian, and Franco-Belgian fronts the more distant Asian fronts would become negligible. Turkey could not long defend herself in Mesopotamia,

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Palestine, and Armenia if the passage of the Dardanelles were forced. Constantinople captured and the Balkan battle line advanced to the Danube, the circle within which the Central Powers were confined would become too narrow for comfort. Concerted and continuous Allied pressure would then be possible at all points of the circumference—the sort of pressure which Foch applied superbly after August, 1918.

But the Allies never forced the Dardanelles Straits. The Western Powers did not succeed in getting into actual contact with the Russians, either in Europe or in Asia. The nearest approach to this great strategical objective was the temporary junction of a small body of Cossacks with the British advance guard in the Tigris Valley, north-east of Bagdad, in the spring of 1917. So nearly till the end of the war the Allies had to fight disjointedly on seven different fronts.

The results of their scattered and wasteful effort were appalling. Russia was put out of the war because she was not highly organized enough industrially to supply herself with guns and munitions. She needed supplies and a stiffening of first-class western officers and troops—the sort of stiffening which Germany constantly furnished to the Austro-Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Turks. She couldn't get them, and in spite of her immense surplus of man power she steadily

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deteriorated in the field, as she had done ten years before in the war with Japan. Military exhaustion in her case was aggravated by pro-German perfidy inside the Russian Court and Cabinet. Russia passed out of the war for all practical purposes at the end of 1916. While she was in it no single purpose of Entente strategy was achieved.

The Allies had shown themselves incapable of a unified concentric offensive. The reason of this lay on the surface. They were unable to attain anything like unity of command. Germany absolutely dominated the Quadruple Alliance. Her General Staff's word was law for all the Teuton Powers. But there was no similar co-ordinating influence on the other side. Great Britain and France were loyal associates. But neither wanted to yield military priority to the other.

National pride and interest stood in the way of a merger. France, by the superiority of her military organization and her greater wealth of military talent, was logically entitled to leadership. But Great Britain had responded to France's appeal for help. She was preparing to raise armies equal in size to those of France. She was conducting campaigns of her own in Palestine and Mesopotamia. She furnished the great bulk of the forces for the Gallipoli expedition. She was loath to surrender control of her own armies—even of those

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actually on French soil. And France was never in a position to ask her to do so. Only the urgency of the United States and the uneasiness in Great Britain following the defeat of the British Fifth Army before St. Quentin, in March, 1918, cleared the way for the tardy nomination of Foch as the Allied generalissimo. Up to that time English military opinion had stood out for a divided command, although the Premier, Mr. Lloyd-George, favoured unification.

Italy entered the war in pursuance of her own national ends. She wanted to secure these—to recover Trieste and the Trentino and to establish herself on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. She had her own strategical plans, and the other Entente Powers could not expect to interfere with them. She found the Austro-Hungarian defence of the Isonzo unexpectedly obstinate. She asked for help in pushing her campaign for Trieste and Laibach. But France and Great Britain preferred to use their troops elsewhere. After Caporetto the Italians called for aid in defending Venice. The French and British then sent some divisions south. By that time Allied unity of command was approaching realization.

As for Russia, there was never a chance of anything like real military fellowship with the Allies. The Russian front remained remote and independent.

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Some general exchange of views through the Allied Military Council was possible. But this council had merely advisory functions. The individual governments and army commands were not bound to follow its suggestions. The first Russian offensive into East Prussia was timed so as to relieve German pressure on France just before the first battle of the Marne. Brusiloff's great Volhynian and Galician offensive of 1916 forced the Austro-Hungarians to suspend their first attack on Italy, down the valley of the Adige. But co-ordination of this sort was rare. The Allied concentric front was too vast, and the Allied strategic clearing house at Versailles was too limited in scope and authority to enforce any genuine unity of military policy.

But even if the Entente Powers had more completely pooled their strength and unified their leadership, they would still have had difficulty in working out a formidable concerted offensive. They lacked the ability to impose their strategy on Germany. The initial German successes in Belgium and France had pinned the French down to the defensive.

The French departments which the German armies had overrun were the chief industrial section of France. From September, 1914, to September, 1918, the Germans were always within sixty miles of Paris. Most of the time they were even closer than that. Paris is

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the heart of France. It was the paramount aim of the French to defend their capital and to dislodge the invaders from French soil. Every other object was secondary.

In Flanders the Germans threatened the Channel ports, which were almost as important to the British as Dover and Folkestone. The French and British armies thus came to grips with the Germans in Northern France, and felt—often to an unreasonable degree—that they could not afford to let go in order to carry the war elsewhere. They were tied down, in a sense, to the Western Front, not alone because it was the front nearest their bases, but because it was the front covering Paris and London.

Many Allied critics have written about the controversy between the “Westerners” and the “Easterners” as if it involved a choice between two spheres of operation which were equally open. But complete freedom of action was denied both to the British and the French—to the French of course, much more than to the British. A French generalissimo would have felt morally compelled—so long as no direct connection with Russia could be established—to confine his offensives to the French front. That was the inevitable result of the German occupation of Belgium and Northern France.

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The Allied local offensives in the West were really a form of defensive. Germany could turn east or west at will, because the offensive was always hers in the broad sense. French and British strategy, whatever form it took, was more or less conditioned on protecting Paris and the Channel ports.

The unforeseen developments of the war put all *a priori* Entente strategy out of joint. France and Russia had made plans as early as 1892 to meet an attack by the Triple Alliance. At that time Russia was rated much higher as a military power than the facts justified. She had defeated Turkey completely in 1877-78. She still retained much of the military reputation she had built up in the Napoleonic Wars. The war with Japan had not yet disclosed her decadence. It was natural, therefore, that the French should have counted in 1892 on being able to make headway, with Russia as an ally, against Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy.

According to the secret military agreements of 1892 (made public in September, 1918, after the Germans had obtained copies of them from the archives at Petrograd), France and Russia expected to be able to crush Germany, while containing the Austro-Hungarian and Italian armies.

These calculations were entirely fallacious. The

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French and Russian staffs estimated that Germany would be able to put into the field at the outset 1,550,000 men and 3564 field guns. Austria-Hungary was expected to mobilize on the Russian front 900,000 men, with 1776 guns. Italy was counted on to muster on the Italian side of the Alps 360,000 men and 1092 guns. Says the report of General de Miribel, of the French General Staff, which was transmitted to Petrograd along with the military protocols:

The forces of the Triple Alliance in the first line therefore would be 137 infantry divisions, with three divisions of cavalry, nineteen divisions of independent cavalry, and 6432 field guns, or a total of 2,810,000 men.

France intended to employ in the first line, after providing for the defence of Algiers and Tunis and of her coasts, seventy-five divisions of infantry, seven divisions of independent cavalry, and 3370 field guns, a total of 1,500,000 men. Russia, after safeguarding her Turkish frontiers, was to supply sixty-six infantry divisions, twenty divisions of cavalry, 80,000 Cossacks, and 3290 guns. The Franco-Russian forces were to total 3,150,000 men and 7160 guns—showing a slight Entente superiority both in troops and artillery.

The Franco-Russian compact called for a vigorous offensive against Germany. The French agreed to



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devote more than five sixths of their first line troops to such an effort. They planned to use not more than ten of their seventy-five infantry divisions on the Italian front, which was strongly protected by mountain barriers. The other sixty-five were to be used on the German border.

French strategy was summarized in these sentences:

The French General Staff is penetrated by the principle that in such a struggle the essential object is to prosecute the destruction of the principal enemy. The defeating of the others must inevitably follow. In a word, once Germany were conquered, the Franco-Russian armies would be able to impose their will on Austria and Italy.

Russia was therefore to model her policy after France's. She was to contain the Austro-Hungarians in Galicia, Bukowina, and Southern Poland with thirty-three divisions and employ her other thirty-three divisions in an invasion of East Prussia.

These forces [said the agreement], added to the sixty-five divisions of the French army, would be sufficiently powerful, especially if they arrived in time, to make an end of the German army.

Futile expectations! Italy broke away from the Triple Alliance in 1914, as soon as war was declared. Her neutrality enabled France to disgarnish the Italian

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frontier and concentrate all her first line divisions in the North. Russia did "arrive in time" on the East Prussian border. But the East Prussian invasion was short-lived. It ended in the huge disaster of Tannenberg. The Russians won an initial victory over the Germans at Gumbinnen—in the early days of August, 1914. But thereafter they never succeeded in defeating the Germans except when fighting on the defensive. Russia as a military power was no longer in the same class with Germany or France. Her armies could still defeat those of Austria-Hungary or Turkey. But they were always hopelessly incapable, through defects in equipment, leadership, and morale, of an offensive against Germany.

The natural result was that the Russians abandoned the strategic precept which the French staff had enunciated—that "the essential object is to prosecute the destruction of the principal enemy." They turned the force of their attack against Austria-Hungary, the secondary enemy. On the Austro-Hungarian front they had a series of remarkable successes. They conquered Bukowina and more than two thirds of Galicia. They captured the fortress of Przemyśl with its garrison of 130,000 men. They fought their way across the Carpathians. In the first nine months of the war they buoyed up the hopes of the Entente, and they

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might have continued to be a factor of the greatest importance if France and Great Britain had been able to munition them, steady them, or direct their military energies, as Germany did with her weaker associates. But Russian isolation was always a fatal obstacle to the accomplishment of the preconceived ends of Entente strategy.

France, too, was tragically unable to live up to her strategical conceptions. She had greatly underestimated German preparedness. Instead of invading Germany, she was forced to a four years' defence of her own territory. At the First Marne it was not a question of her "making an end of the German army," but of herself escaping being made an end of.

Joffre did launch a French offensive in August, 1914, as a stopper to the German invasion of Belgium. It showed his fine spirit of confidence in the armies under his command. But it had little else to recommend it. The dash into Alsace, the advance across the Seille toward Metz, and the movement east of the Meuse into the Ardennes were strategical errors. They were based on a miscalculation of German strength. Joffre's idea, apparently, was that the irruption of the German right wing through Belgium could be halted by French pressure on the armies constituting the German left wing.

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It could have been if the French armies had been considerably superior to the German in numbers. But even adding the British contingent the French had no superiority. General Bernhardt had pointed out in his book *How Germany Makes War*, a companion piece to *Germany and the Next War*, that if the Germans elected to invade France through Belgium, they could well afford to allow the French armies on the Lorraine and Alsace front to make some progress toward the Rhine. This progress would throw them farther to the east and facilitate the success of an envelopment of the French left close to Paris, such as Kluck attempted.

Joffre made the experiment, however. It failed completely. And from that time on until the armistice was signed the Allied armies on the West Front were never again in a position to invade Germany.

After November, 1914, the revolution in tactics brought about by trench warfare overweighed the offensive and wholly negated the idea of obtaining a decision against the most powerful opponent. There was a reversion to immobile warfare—to the stagnation of trench operations, which were, in effect, siege operations conducted in the open field. With deep, continuous defence lines, stretching from Switzerland to the North Sea, envelopment ceased to be a

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possibility. The only grand scale offensive which was practicable was an attempt at "breaking through" after the Napoleonic manner.

Joffre's famous policy of "nibbling" aimed at breaching the German defence barrier at one point or another—trusting to some favouring combination of circumstances to widen out the opening. But no real "break-through" was effected. The French and British offensives of 1915, 1916, and 1917 were all of the same pattern. They achieved local successes—usually at an excessive cost. But they never altered the situation on the Western Front. They could not end the stalemate of rigid positional warfare. It was not until after the battle of Cambrai, in November, 1917, that the way was opened for a revival of the warfare of movement. Up to that time the "destruction" of the German army by the French and British or the "destruction" of the British and French armies by the Germans was practically out of the question.

The Allies made only one real venture in grand strategy up to the midsummer of 1918. That was the attempt to force the Dardanelles. Because this venture failed—and failed unnecessarily—Winston Churchill, its chief sponsor, was most unmercifully criticized. But it was a thoroughly sound project. The capture of Constantinople, early in 1915, would have localized

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the war in Europe. It would have saved Russia, connected and greatly shortened the Allied battlefront, and carried the war at an early date into Hungary and Austria. It would have eliminated Turkey and Bulgaria as Teuton allies.

The Dardanelles expedition was a ghastly disappointment. Great Britain was probably unequal in 1915 to the conduct of any very highly organized offensive. And France had to think first of her own protection. But the Dardanelles forts were weak and poorly munitioned. They would have fallen and the whole face of the war would have been changed if the British had not bungled the great opportunity then put in their hands.

The fiasco at Gallipoli and the fruitlessness for a long time of the Salonica venture led to the ascendancy in Allied military councils of the so-called Western school. This school maintained that the only hope of Allied victory lay in the West and that all effort should be concentrated there. It was necessary for France to employ practically all her strength on the Western Front, and it was more convenient for Great Britain to help France in the West than to carry the war elsewhere. Yet it is clear now that France and Great Britain alone could not have won in the West. The sole chance of German defeat there lay in the accumula-

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tion of forces sufficiently superior to break through the German lines. And that accumulation was possible only after the United States had entered the war.

The extreme Western school cherished an illusion. And British military policy gradually admitted that illusion and began to imitate the natural German policy of seeking to make conquests at the expense of the weaker enemy powers. Great Britain's imperial interests were widespread. She was forced to consider Asia and Africa as well as Europe. She intended to absorb the lion's share of the German colonies. She also realized the advantage of establishing a claim on the outlying portions of the moribund Turkish Empire.

So, after defending Egypt in 1914, Great Britain started in slashing away at the outer fringes of Turkey's possessions in Asia. One expedition was started up the Tigris River toward Bagdad. Another was organized to push across the desert of Sinai into Southern Palestine. Progress with both these ventures was slow. The first came to a dead halt with the British defeat below Ctesiphon and the retreat to Kut-el-Amara. What was left of the first Mesopotamian expeditionary army surrendered to the Turks at Kut in April, 1916. Bagdad was captured, however, by General Maude about a year later, and with its fall Mesopotamia passed into British hands. Jerusalem was not reached

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until December 9, 1917. But meanwhile Arabia had been detached from Turkey by British diplomacy, native Arabian states being established under Entente protection.

These Eastern "side shows" were bitterly denounced by the extreme school of "Westerners" in England. But they proved their value later, when Allenby destroyed the Turkish armies north and north-east of Jerusalem in September, 1918, and took both Damascus and Aleppo. That was a finishing blow to Turkey, which at once followed Bulgaria's example and deserted the Quadruple Alliance. The Eastern campaigns, always important from a political point of view, had helped to realize the true Allied strategical conception of a concentric attack on the Teuton Powers. They also enabled Great Britain to utilize about one million East Indian troops, who could not have been employed to advantage in Europe, as experience with the first Indian contingents in Flanders in the fall of 1914 had clearly demonstrated.

Except for the Russian offensives of 1914 in Galicia and Bukowina, no serious progress was made toward an occupation of Austrian territory. The Russians nearly reached Cracow in the early days of the war and got across the Dukla and Lupkow passes, in the Carpathians. Then came the great retreat of 1915.



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Brusiloff recovered a little ground in Galicia and the Bukowina in his brilliant offensive of 1916. The Italians took Gorizia and pushed a short distance eastward of the Isonzo toward Trieste. But they were fighting on their own soil when the war ended. Bulgaria's territory remained intact up to within a day or two of the Bulgarian armistice.

Foch didn't have a chance to unify Allied policy until July, 1918. He was eclectic in his strategy. He could afford to be so. By the time he got ready to attack he had an unlimited strategic reserve in sight. He could assume the offensive on all fronts without risk. This he did in a most brilliant and skilful manner. The final Allied campaign was marked by extraordinary confidence and energy. It aimed at the destruction of all the enemy armies in the field. And those armies, one and all, surrendered in order to escape destruction. Foch's generalship from July 18th on was without a flaw. He realized the original French conception of "destroying the principal enemy." Simultaneously he destroyed the subsidiary enemies.

Before he became commander-in-chief, however, Allied strategy remained rudimentary. Equally with the German, Allied strategical preconceptions were upset by the unforeseen developments of the war. But since Allied policy was limited in the main to a

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four-year effort to eject the Germans from France, it never suffered, as German policy did, from the temptation to adhere slavishly to pre-war plans which experience kept showing to be impracticable.

The Allies were guilty of many glaring faults in the conduct of the war. As has been pointed out, dispersion of command was one of these. Diplomatic and military mismanagement in the Balkans was another. The Entente was chargeable with one very damaging strategic blunder—the failure to effect a contact between the Western and the Russian fronts. But it made no such flagrant and irreparable error as Germany did when she ran amuck with the U-boat.

Speaking broadly, the strategy of neither side was clearly thought out or shrewdly accommodated to the vicissitudes of the military situation. Germany profited immensely by blunders of omission on the part of the Allies. She lost the war because she was capable of a blunder of commission more unpardonable than any of theirs.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIRST MARNE

THERE was no "Miracle of the Marne." The first battle of that name bulks large in the history of the war because of the dramatic glamour and moral value of the French victory. There has been a natural tendency to rhapsodize about it. It has been frequently classified as one of the decisive battles of the world—along with Marathon, Châlons, Poitiers, Waterloo, and Gettysburg.

Yet we see now that it was not decisive in any positive sense. It was a battle of arrest. It merely postponed a decision. It did not break the German hold on France. For after the retreat to the Aisne the German armies still threatened Paris. They were to remain on French soil for more than four years, to reach and pass the Marne again, and to penetrate once more almost to Amiens. Paris escaped bombardment in 1914. But the German heavy guns were almost in a position to destroy it in June and July, 1918.

Joffre's victory has been pictured as the result of an

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almost supernatural effort on the part of beaten, retreating, shaken Allied troops. Spirit has been represented as triumphing in some mysterious ecstatic way over brute force. In his interesting study of the first battle of the Marne, Louis Madelin, a French historian, has said:

In contact with the soil from which France took her existence, Frenchmen will discover in themselves superhuman strength, like Antæus, the giant in the fable, who became invincible every time Hercules allowed him to embrace his Mother, the Earth. And, verily, I seem to see on September 5th a giant suddenly reinvigorated, firmly set with obstinate front against the invader, his elbows resting securely on the camps of Paris and Verdun.

There was an element of the super-heroic in the French stand below the Marne after the long retreat from the north-eastern frontier. But that stand could not have been made if the retreat had not been in the true sense a "strategic retirement," conducted with admirable skill and finally leading the Germans into a trap.

At the time the retirement and its purpose were misunderstood—nowhere more completely than at German Grand Headquarters. All that the world in general could see was that the French had failed to check the German invasion and that the German masses were

pouring down through Belgium and Northern France, almost unmolested, toward Paris. The French Government transferred its headquarters to Bordeaux. There was a rush to get away from the threatened capital. The friends of the Allied cause were in despair.

Then Joffre's trap was sprung. Despair changed to hysterical elation. The Germans drew back from below the Marne, not so much because they were beaten in the field, but because they found themselves in an impossible position strategically. Still under the spell of a tremendous emotional reaction, the Allied publics accepted an exaggerated view of the German failure. Legends of the Marne began to be created. There is the legend, for instance, of the marshes of St. Gond, in which the Prussian Guard was supposed to have been engulfed, as the Russians were in the marshes at Tannenberg. But as M. Madelin himself says:

The marshes are not what legend (for there is already a legend of the Marne) have made them to be. No one stuck in the quagmire, for during those months such a thing would be impossible. After a very hot summer and in spite of slight rains, they were like a dry river-bed, in which reeds and grasses grew out of the grey, cracked earth. The Prussian Guard are forced to fight there, exposed to our artillery, and though they do not actually stick there, as romantic writers have described, they suffer heavily from our deadly fire.

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In dealing with the First Marne the Germans went to the other extreme. They refused for a long time to discuss the battle, or even to mention it. Their communiqués of September, 1914, made no direct allusion to the fighting on the Ourcq, on the Petit Morin and Grand Morin, about Fère Champenoise, on the Ornin and the Aire, or east of Nancy. The very word Marne was taboo to the German public. And it remained so until near the end of the war.

In 1915 the German General Staff began the publication of a series of descriptions of the operations in the field, for the instruction of German readers. It was called *Kriegsberichte aus dem Grossen Hauptquartier*, and comprised some twenty-five or thirty small volumes, in paper covers, each dealing with a separate campaign or battle. The first one covered the siege of Maubeuge, the French frontier fortress which fell early in September, 1914. The second one covered the battle of Soissons, which occurred in January, 1915. Not a line, not a single word, was given to the Marne. Only in 1917 and 1918 do we find German military critics freely admitting the fact of the first great German repulse in France.

In his *Deductions from the World War*, written in 1917, Lieutenant-General Baron Freytag-Loringhoven quotes Herr Stegemann, a pro-German Swiss military

critic, who wrote a book about the Marne campaign. Freytag-Loringhoven says:

If at that time (in August, 1914) no decisive victory fell to our share, and our strength proved insufficient to vanquish France, we must none the less consider that up to the Marne we had achieved enormous things.

"In the very moment of accomplishment the completion of the battle was abandoned for far-reaching general reasons. . . . The battle was broken off by the German Supreme Command, and, in view of the general situation, a strategic retreat to a new line was ordered."

This is the judgment of a neutral writer on the battle of the Marne, and certainly it would have taken very little to turn the scale so that victory might have fallen to us and a retreat been avoided.

Thus in Germany the Marne at last attained a place in military history.

The victory of September 5th-9th restored a situation which the French General Staff had almost allowed to get beyond its control. Joffre's strategy in the first weeks of the war proved ineffective. He adhered firmly to the idea that the Germans would not come through Belgium rapidly or in great force. He concentrated the great part of his available strength on the Lorraine-Alsace front and held the Belgian frontier lightly. His plan was, apparently, to match a German

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attack through Belgium with a French advance toward the Rhine. He sent north only one army, the Fifth, under Lanrezac, to hold the triangle from Dinant down the Meuse to Namur, and thence west to Charleroi. It was supported on the left by a part of the British Expeditionary Army.

These Allied forces were never able to make a junction with the Belgian army, which was driven north from Brussels in the direction of Antwerp. They were also far inferior in numbers to the three armies of Kluck, Bülow, and Hausen, which were rapidly moving west through Belgium.

Joffre expected to relieve the pressure on his own weak left wing by striking at the German left wing from the southern edge of Belgium down to the Swiss border. Possibly he never expected the Germans to get through Belgium within a month. He therefore developed a general offensive against the German left, beginning in southern Alsace. An army from Belfort pushed across the border, taking Altkirch on August 8th. The next day it occupied Mulhouse. It was promptly expelled from Mulhouse by the Germans. This city was retaken by General Pau on August 19th. But the second upper Alsace invasion came abruptly to an end when the French were defeated farther north in Lorraine.



Two armies under de Castelnau and Dubail, moving east from Nancy, entered the Saar Valley, to the south of Metz, about August 12th. They made progress for several days, crossing the Metz-Strasbourg railroad, about eighteen miles east of the frontier. Here they were beaten, in the battles of Sarrebourg and Morhange, by two German armies, the one under the Crown Prince of Bavaria and the other under General Heeringen. By August 23d the Germans were across the French line and threatening Nancy.

The third offensive was intrusted to the Fourth Army, under General de Langle de Cary, supported on the right by the Third Army, under General Ruffey, and the special army of Lorraine, under General Maunoury. These forces amounted to thirty-one divisions, or about six hundred thousand men. They were to operate on a front from Metz north to Dinant. Opposed to them were the Fifth, Fourth, and Third German armies, under the Crown Prince of Prussia, the Grand Duke of Württemberg, and General Hausen, respectively. These armies comprised twenty-nine and one half divisions, and were slightly inferior, except in artillery, to the French.

The German High Command was already executing an envelopment against the French left wing, pivoting the movement on Metz. This might have been disar-

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ranged by a successful French attack along the Belgian frontier, east of Sedan. De Langle de Cary's Fourth Army was, therefore, ordered to move into the Ardennes Forest, with Neufchâteau as its first objective. But the Ardennes is an exceedingly difficult country to fight in. The Fourth Army got tangled up in the forest. Its movements were badly co-ordinated. Only a small number of its divisions were properly utilized, and they were defeated in an engagement known as the battle of Neufchâteau. Ruffey's Third Army was also beaten at Virton, on the extreme southern Belgian border. The most ambitious of Joffre's offensives failed completely and the three armies engaged in it retreated to and beyond the Meuse.

The reverse at Neufchâteau imperilled the Fifth French Army holding the Dinant-Namur-Charleroi right angle. Hausen's army now joined with Bülow's and Kluck's in the swing to the west through Belgium. The Allied left wing—the British on the outer edge of it—was overlapped, and the retreat to the Marne began.

The British Expeditionary Army, numbering only about seventy thousand men, suddenly found itself out-flanked by part of the German Second Army and all of the German First Army. Sir John French even lost touch for a while with Lanrezac. His only safety lay in a hurried retirement. And Lanrezac had begun

to retreat before he did. Once the German campaign of envelopment—planned by Count Schlieffen—got under full head the whole French plan of offence and defence went glimmering. Joffre could not hope to make a successful stand until he had found a tenable line and had completely regrouped his armies.

The French General Staff sought later to construct a reasonable explanation of the initial defeats, which had left all of Northeastern France open to the enemy. This explanation is paraphrased by Joseph Reinach—the “Polybe” of *Le Figaro*—in his *La Guerre sur le Front Occidental*. He says:

On the one hand, divisions were thrown too quickly under the enemy's fire. The men and certain chiefs, in this first great encounter, carried boldness to the point of excess. An ignorance of the conditions of war was manifested in a contempt, pushed to defiance, of danger and death. On the other hand, weaknesses were disclosed. Some commanders proved themselves real leaders in battle. Others lost their reputations, sometimes deserved, but for other qualities than those of action, which is something else than science. Finally there were errors, both in the employment of infantry and in that of artillery. And the liaison between them was insufficient.

Every French military critic has also testified to the fact that in the early part of the war the French heavy artillery was vastly inferior to the German.

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But these explanations do not cover the whole ground. It is clear that the French mobilization was badly planned in that it did not provide sufficient protection against an attack coming through Belgium. Even after the strength of the German movement across Belgium began to be disclosed, Joffre continued to minimize it and neglected to reinforce his threatened left wing. The French commander-in-chief had seriously underestimated the German strength, both in the north and in the south. He had actually played into the enemy's hand by developing his abortive Alsace-Lorraine and Ardennes offensives.

Joffre's reputation as a soldier will rest on the coolness with which he faced the results of his own miscalculations. He had to deal with a heart-breaking situation in the last days of August, 1914. But he didn't lose courage. He determined to repair his errors. He realized that he would have to surrender at once a considerable portion of Northern France. He saw that the German advance couldn't well be halted short of Paris. Had he been a leader of inferior mould he would have done what Ludendorff did after the Second Marne. He would have organized a defence on the line of the Oise or the Somme—or at the La Fère-Laon-Rheims barrier.

He showed his real quality by deciding to put aside

all half-way measures, to allow the German envelopment movement to run its course and not to venture a battle until he could deliver it under really favourable conditions. He still had the utmost faith in his armies and he never gave over the idea of renewing the offensive. He retreated with a clear strategic purpose in view, although the puffed-up German High Command credited him merely with a desire to escape punishment.

Thus, he wrote on August 25th, when the retirement began:

The proposed offensive movement not being possible, ulterior operations will be effected by the addition of the Fourth and Fifth Corps of the British and fresh forces taken from our eastern area, so as to form on our left a *mass capable of taking the offensive* while the other armies will hold the attacks of the enemy in check for the time required.

Again, on August 27th, he wrote to General de Langle de Cary:

I see nothing against your remaining until tomorrow, the 28th, in order to consolidate your success and show that our withdrawal is purely strategic; but on the 29th every one must retreat.

The Allied publics were puzzled and dismayed by the rapidity of the Allied withdrawal from Northeastern France. The British, on the extreme left, who were

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most exposed to Kluck's turning's movement, retreated for five days and nights with hardly a pause. Then, south of the Somme, the Allied left wing was measurably out of peril. But Joffre was not ready to give battle on the Somme, the Oise, or the Aisne. So the general retirement continued four days longer, until the French left wing rested on the fortified zone of Paris.

The Germans were also unable to understand why the Allies didn't turn and fight. Kluck said in November, 1918, that he expected an obstinate resistance on his front after the battles of Mons and Charle-roi. Instead he had difficulty in keeping in touch with the retreating Allied forces. The German High Command was thrown off its balance by the appearance of French and British disorganization. It jumped to the conclusion that it was on the verge of a repetition of the elder Moltke's easy successes in 1870. It already saw France vanquished and the black, white, and red standard floating from the Eiffel Tower.

Overconfidence made the German General Staff incautious. It had no thought of a renewal of the French offensive. It allowed the German columns to outravel their heavier artillery and their transport. The Germans were marching away from their bases. The French were retiring toward theirs. Nor did the

German Staff appear to be aware that from September 1st on the strategical situation was changing rapidly in favour of the French.

The Schlieffen envelopment which Kluck and Bülow were charged with executing was feasible enough so long as the Allied left wing remained "in the air." It did remain so while the British were north of the Oise. Kluck's right then overreached the Allied left. His outposts entered Amiens. Most of his troops came down to the Oise crossings to the west of Compiègne. There were no Allied troops in that region to stop them.

But when they approached the fortified zone of Paris conditions altered. The German right wing armies could not invest Paris. For the German objective was not Paris, but the French armies. They could not isolate or mask Paris by passing around it on the west. Kluck's army was not large enough for such an operation. He may have thought that Paris would be evacuated by its garrison, as it had been by the French Government. After he reached the north-eastern outskirts of the capital and found no sign of evacuation he conceived the idea of merely skirting Paris and turning south-east in pursuit of the British, who had retreated across the Grand Morin to a position below Coulommiers. Possibly he expected

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to occupy Paris after the Allies had been driven south of the Seine.

The painfully meagre French bulletins in the last days of August and the first days of September merely disclosed an uninterrupted retreat. Sedan Day was at hand. The world looked forward to another Sedan. Yet it was becoming apparent even then that the German envelopment movement had failed. On September 4th, two days before the date on which Joffre was planning to begin his new offensive, I wrote in an article, published in the New York *Tribune* of September 5th:

From the point of view of strategy the French position is by no means desperate. An inferior force could hold it against a superior one, and from it an equal or superior force could deal a fatal blow at an over-extended enemy.

That was before Maunoury's flanking movement east of Paris had started. On September 6th I wrote:

The German turning movement, which apparently aimed at getting between the Allied forces and Paris at some point north-north-east of the capital failed of its purpose when the Allies retreated so far that their extreme left wing rested on the Paris forts. Now the turning army has headed east and away from Paris, probably for the purpose of helping to deliver a converging attack on the Allied centre.



Again, on September 8th, when only meagre reports had reached the United States of the developments east of Paris, I said (*Tribune* of September 9th):

The weakness of the German position is that it is now outflanked on the right, from which direction the Allies are attacking von Kluck and trying to get into his rear. If the Allies can hold along their curved-back left centre the situation will be very favourable to them from the tactical point of view, since a successful flank and rear attack from the direction of Meaux would cut the present German communications north and compel a hurried retreat toward Belgium and Luxemburg.

The German First Army had, in fact, been placed in what Joffre described in an order issued by him on September 4th as "a foolhardy position." It had entered the French trap. It was exposed to an attack out of Paris by an army whose presence in that neighbourhood the German Staff did not suspect. Joffre had organized the Sixth French Army, transferring Maunoury from the Army of Lorraine to command it. This force was massed behind the Paris fortifications. It advanced east of Meaux on September 5th to attack Kluck's flank and rear. Another new army had been created under Foch and assigned to the French left centre.

The Allied armies on September 6th stood in this

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order from Paris to Verdun: The Sixth, under Maunoury, on the Ourcq, facing east; the British Expeditionary Army, under Sir John French, below Coulommiers, facing north; the Fifth Army, now under Franchet d'Esperey, who had replaced Lanrezac, stretching as far as Sezanne; the Ninth, under Foch, from Sezanne to Camp de Mailly; the Fourth, under de Langle de Cary, from Sompuis to Sermaize; the Third, under Sarraill, who had replaced Ruffey, bending in a sharp angle from Revigny to Souilly. Verdun was held by its permanent garrison. Opposite the Allies from Coulommiers to Verdun were the first five German armies, under Kluck, Bülow, Hausen, the Grand Duke of Württemberg, and the Crown Prince of Prussia. Kluck had left only a single reserve corps of forty thousand men to guard his rear toward Paris.

Maunoury's attack on this corps put the German First Army in peril. But its commander extricated it with remarkable skill. He had been caught napping. He pulled free by daring generalship. Leaving only a fraction of his army confronting Sir John French, he hurried the rest of it back toward the Ourcq and succeeded in fighting Maunoury to a standstill. On September 9th he had bent Maunoury's left wing back toward Paris. But the next day he was in full retreat. His own retrograde movement had dislocated Bülow's

line, on his left. And Bülow's retirement opened the gap still further east through which Foch drove with part of the Ninth Army, causing the defeat and hurried retirement of Hausen.

Having failed absolutely to envelop the Allied left the German High Command had tried a "breaking through" operation in the centre. Here the action of La Fère-Champenoise was fought, in which Foch, with help from d'Esperey, held on grimly for four days against German attacks, and on the fourth turned and routed the enemy.

As a battle the First Marne has many confusing features. It represented a French counter-offensive. Yet throughout the greater part of it the French fought on the defensive. Of the five French armies only two were used to the limit—the Sixth and the Ninth. The British hardly fought at all. On the German side only two of the five armies, Kluck's and Hausen's, were fully engaged.

Moreover, Joffre's strategical plans were frustrated. An exceptional opportunity was lost through lack of close co-operation between Maunoury and Sir John French and by the latter's failure to contain a larger part of Kluck's forces below the Marne. The envelopment which Joffre attempted was only a halfway success. Faults in the execution of his orders prevented

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him from taking advantage of "the foolhardy position" of the German First Army.

Considerations of this sort prompted the Germans to minimize their defeat at the Marne and even to deny defeat there. The battle for them was one of extrication from a predicament due to their own heedlessness and overconfidence. They accomplished the strategical extrication at which they aimed. They were beaten in the field at only one or two points. Their losses were probably less than those of the Allies. Virtually no German prisoners or guns were taken.

The German armies on the right wing retreated thirty miles or more. But they were able to stop at the Aisne and to make good their grip on Northern France. This is the sort of case made out for the drawn battle view of the Marne which was held by most German critics and by pro-German neutrals, like the Swiss critic, Stegemann.

This view, however, fails to take into account both the extraordinary moral and the substantial military consequences of the German defeat. The Marne restored Allied confidence. France and Great Britain needed time to develop their strength. The German failure in the Marne campaign pointed to a long war. And a long war was to the advantage of the Western Allies. Germany counted on the Cannæ which Schlieff-

fen had planned. But there was to be in the west no German Cannæ—no Sedan, no Vionville, Gravelotte, or St. Privat. France had not been lost. But the world continued to think mistakenly that some impenetrable “Miracle of the Marne” had saved her.

In the military sense the German High Command had bungled its initial offensive of the war only less startlingly than Joffre had bungled his. The Germans were left with some substantial evidences of success in their hands, having acquired an immensely valuable foothold in Belgium and France. But they suffered a tremendous loss in military prestige. Their offensive came to grief under circumstances so painful that by common consent, both at the front and in the rear, they were made the object of a German conspiracy or silence.

Freytag-Loringhoven says in his *Deductions from the World War* that the German High Command didn't have sufficient forces to carry through Schlieffen's envelopment plan. He argues that another German army should have been organized, “disposed in échelon behind the German right wing.” That is to say, Kluck should have been supported at the Marne by an additional German army which would have taken care of any attack coming east out of Paris. Yet the German High Command had many disengaged troops. The

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idea of using them to extend the German right never occurred to it.

Moreover, Count Schlieffen's plan also called for an envelopment of the French right in Lorraine. This part of the programme never came to anything. The German armies on the Lorraine border were defeated decisively by Dubail and de Castelnau at the same time that the armies which had pivoted from Metz were being defeated between Paris and Verdun.

The Marne campaign showed that the German military machine in 1914 was not what it was in 1870-71. It could crack on occasion. The Germans had broken into Belgium and Northern France with extraordinary ease. But they could not "steam roller" their way to Paris. They would now have to fight to stay where they were—to hold the line of the Aisne east to Verdun, and to extend that line up to the North Sea.

In spite of the check below the Marne the German position in France in mid-September, 1914, was still advantageous and formidable. But in comparison with what it might have been it seemed fettered and unpromising. The discouragement which prevailed at German Grand Headquarters after the retreat to the Aisne, and which forecast the younger Moltke's retirement, was a fair measure of the shock to German hopes involved in Joffre's sensational "come back" victory.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BATTLE OF FLANDERS

WITH the Allied publics the emotional reaction to the first battle of the Marne was so prodigious as to obscure its actual military results. Joffre was heroized. Yet from the military point of view what he had done was only to repair in part the errors he had committed in the opening weeks of the war. He had skilfully taken advantage of mistakes on the German side comparable to his own.

While he remained commander-in-chief of the French armies French writers continued to take a complacent view of his strategy. Gabriel Hanotaux, historian and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, who has written brilliantly and voluminously about the war, reflects that view. He insists that Joffre's plan of operations was adequate from the start. This judgment is based on the assumption that the French commander-in-chief achieved his general purpose, which was to prevent the envelopment of the French armies undertaken by the younger Moltke, according to Count

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Schlieffen's plans. "The German armies," says Hannotaux, in an appreciation of Joffre, "did not turn the French armies, which was their objective. On the contrary, they were enveloped themselves."

But this pleasing theory leaves out of account what happened before Kluck heedlessly plunged into the trap set for him east of Paris. After 1916 French opinion began to measure more accurately the consequences of Joffre's blunders in August, 1914. In volume iii. of his *La Grande Guerre sur le Front Occidental* (written in 1917 and published in 1918), General Palat (Pierre Lehautcourt) thus answers M. Hannotaux's argument:

The (French) offensive in Belgium, on the Sambre and in the Ardennes, lasted from August 21st to August 23d. After August 24th we were everywhere in full retreat. The national territory was violated in several directions. And on the evening of the 25th we had already allowed the enemy to occupy a zone—very important because of its extent, its wealth, and its population—of that France so patiently formed by the labour of so many generations. By September 5th our armies were thrown south of the Marne, and it was a question of carrying them south of the Seine. Paris was uncovered and at the mercy of the German armies, and the government had been transferred to Bordeaux.

How can we admire a strategy whose results still weigh upon us after four years of the most frightful



war, abounding in sacrifices of every sort? We shall not cease to repeat what many others, who have closely observed the course of events, also think. The reverses of the beginning of the war would never have been produced in all their terrible amplitude had it not been for initial errors committed in the plan of concentration as well as in the plan of operations adopted by our High Command.

That concentration was made at first exclusively on the Franco-German frontier, in spite of so many signs which indicated the violation of Belgian territory. The High Command long persisted in its error, in place of repairing it with the promptitude which circumstance demanded. It even had the idea of undertaking—twice in Alsace and then in Lorraine—parasitic offensives which it knew couldn't lead to anything, even under favourable conditions. Finally, after having half way overcome the bulk of the faults committed in the concentration, it launched tardily in Belgium a counter-offensive which was to be attempted against forces more considerable than ours and whose success, in the circumstances, was assuredly impossible. How can we applaud strategic dispositions so scattering, which ended finally, after our pretending to impose our will on the enemy, in his will being imposed on us?

Impressive and inspiring as the victory of the Marne was, it could not restore an equilibrium on the Western Front. It could not expunge the consequences of the earlier French failure. Within ten days after the battle the Allies found out that they were not on the road

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to recover the valuable industrial districts of North-eastern France. They also discovered that they had not even wrested the offensive out of the hands of the Germans.

Kluck stopped on the Aisne above Soissons. Bülow halted a little north of Rheims. They both were counter-attacking about September 18th. Further east, in the Argonne region, the armies of the Grand Duke of Württemberg and the Crown Prince of Prussia pressed south again a considerable distance. South of Verdun a German force from Metz took Fort Camp des Romains and St. Mihiel, on the Meuse, creating the famous St. Mihiel salient, which remained invulnerable until the Americans suddenly wiped it off the map in one day in September, 1918.

After September 20, 1914, the chief problem for both armies in the West was to link up the front north-east of Paris with the Belgian front. For Great Britain as well as for France it was imperative to cover the Channel ports, which were to serve as the chief bases of the British Expeditionary Forces. It was equally important for the Germans, giving over for the present their dream of capturing the French capital, to round out their occupation of Belgium, take Antwerp, establish themselves on the North Sea coast of Belgium, and, if possible, to seize Dunkirk and Calais.

Joffre made the first move in the so-called "race for the sea" by extending his left wing north in the direction of Amiens and compelling Kluck to follow suit. But Joffre's strategy was defensive rather than offensive in character. He was seeking to get north chiefly to protect the Channel bases and to extricate the Belgian army, which was about to be penned up in Antwerp.

Antwerp was again to demonstrate the vulnerability of the old-fashioned fortress. As soon as the German position on the Aisne was stabilized Moltke turned his attention to the isolated Belgian forces which had retired from Brussels to Antwerp about the middle of August. The Germans in Belgium were still well south of the Scheldt River, holding the line of the Meuse and the line through Brussels to Mons. King Albert's troops held the fortified zone about Antwerp, and still had an avenue of retreat west along the north bank of the Scheldt to Ghent, Ostend, and French Flanders. But just then there were no Allied armies in that region with which they could make a junction.

Joffre at first aimed at taking St. Quentin and threatening the German communications with Maubeuge. But his troops, working east from Amiens, were soon checked by Kluck. They lost Roye, Péronne, and Bapaume, and were crowded back to the line of Arras,

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Lens, and La Bassée. Lille was recovered for a brief period and then lost again. Everywhere the Allies were thrust back from the road leading to Ghent and Antwerp.

The "race for the sea" caused a complete displacement of the original distribution of forces in the West. Both sides depleted the Alsace-Lorraine front. De Castelnau was transferred to Picardy; Foch's Ninth Army and the British Expeditionary Army were sent to Flanders. Crown Prince Rupprecht's Bavarian army was shifted to Belgium and remained there for the next four years. On the Alsace-Lorraine border the war lapsed into a trench deadlock. This was never interrupted south of St. Mihiel. In the Meuse region it was broken only once—by the long drawn-out battle of Verdun. Events had corrected the overconcentration of the French on the Franco-German boundary and vindicated, from the strictly military point of view, the German choice of Belgium as the real sally-port into France.

By the end of September it was evident that the French and British armies could not relieve Antwerp. They had reached the neighbourhood of Lille and Ypres. But they had been barred from the Scheldt Valley. The only question now was whether they could intervene sufficiently to extricate the Belgian army still in Antwerp.

The siege of the great Belgian citadel made startling progress. It lasted in all only about ten days. The Belgian army should have been started earlier on its retreat to Bruges and Ostend. Its departure was delayed by an ill-advised attempt on the part of Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty in the Asquith Cabinet, to prolong the defence. He visited Antwerp and then sent over a half-trained British naval brigade to reinforce the garrison. The elaborate outer fortifications proved as useless, under the fire of the big Krupp and Skoda howitzers, as the fortifications of Liège, Namur, and Maubeuge, had been. The city itself was shelled on October 7th. It surrendered on October 9th, the remnant of the garrison retiring across the border into Holland.

King Albert's army was hurried in its retreat and lost a division on the way to Bruges, the Germans crossing the Scheldt and crowding the Belgian rear-guard into Dutch territory. Bruges could not be held. Neither could Ostend. The retiring Belgians were not able to unite with the French and British until they had crossed the Yser River and filled the gap in the Allied line between Ypres and Nieuport.

The capture of Antwerp, Bruges, Ostend, and Zeebrugge and the occupation of all but a narrow strip of Belgian territory ended the second phase of the war

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of movement in the western field. Fixed trench lines now ran from the Swiss border to the North Sea. The long deadlock of the war of positions was approaching. The battle of the Marne had interrupted German progress in the south. But it had not sufficed to check it in the north. Allied expectations in the glow of the first days following Joffre's victory had not been realized. It had been hoped that the German retreat from the Marne would continue and that the German hold on Northern France and Belgium would be shaken loose. It would have been if the First Marne had been a decisive battle in any positive sense.

As a matter of fact the Allies lost ground, instead of gaining it, from the time the Germans halted at the Aisne. The German High Command regained the strategical offensive in the latter half of September and retained it through the rest of 1914. It frustrated the main purpose of Joffre's northward flanking movement, which was to manœuvre the German armies back toward the Sambre and the Meuse, to relieve Antwerp, and to break the German hold on Belgium. Joffre was trying to nullify the results of the initial German successes in the north, due largely to his own faulty dispositions and movements in the first weeks of the war. He did not succeed in this. On the contrary, the Germans were able to gather the full fruits

of these early successes, overrunning Western Belgium, seizing the Belgian North Sea harbours, Lille, Cambrai, Douai, and Lens, destroying Arras and threatening the approaches to the Channel ports.

The Germans were able to exploit the military advantages accruing from their first onrush into Belgium largely because of their more advanced mobilization. In August they had put about 1,500,000 men into the first line in the west. The French were then little inferior in strength. But the German reserves became available more quickly and in larger numbers. Many newly formed German divisions, of fairly good quality, were rushed into Belgium. In October and November German superiority in man power became pronounced. There had always been a decided superiority in artillery, in machine guns, and in munitions.

To oppose these new German formations the Allies had to throw in a strange medley of reinforcements—French marines, Moroccans, Algerians, Senegalese, British Sikhs, and other East Indian contingents, the first Canadian regiments, and English territorials. The Allied line was thinnest at its northern end. And against this end the next German offensive on a grand scale was to be directed.

Having been balked in the first drive for Paris, the German High Command conceived the idea of com-

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pensating itself by a drive for the Channel ports. The conquest of Belgium had given new value to those ports as German sea bases. Antwerp now furnished a headquarters for German submarine activities within easy range of the English Channel. Napoleon once described Antwerp as "a pistol pointed at the heart of England." This was a rhetorical exaggeration. He was never able to load or discharge the pistol. Nor would Antwerp have been of any special value to Germany for surface naval operations.

But the submarine had now startlingly demonstrated its value. From the day, late in September, 1914, when Lieutenant Weddigen, commanding the U-9, sank the British warships *Hogue*, *Cressy*, and *Aboukir* within the space of half an hour, the possibility of some offensive action against England had begun to stir the German imagination. The main British fleet was forced to retire to a safe distance north of Scotland. The protection of the British lines of communication across the Channel to Boulogne and Havre was left to light vessels. To destroy those communications, both by submarine attack and by pushing along the coast to Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne, would not only produce consternation in England, but would gravely compromise the Allied position in Northern France.



The Germans also intended to use the submarine as a commerce destroyer and blockader. Possession of Bruges, with its canals to Zeebrugge and Ostend, gave them, with Antwerp, an admirable operating base, close to the main lines of English commerce. If they could also seize the French coast opposite Dover they might hope practically to seal Dover Strait.

A slight delay in organizing the new contingents lost Germany her best chance to reach Dunkirk and Calais. Early in October the Allied left wing rested on Béthune. German cavalry occupied the valley of the Lys River, north of Béthune, with advance guards beyond Bailleul. The British Expeditionary Army left the Aisne on October 5th and began to detrain a few days later at St. Omer. From that point it marched north-east to form a junction with the Belgian army, which was retreating from Antwerp, covered by British cavalry under General Rawlinson.

The German cavalry in the Lys Valley could not hold their ground and retired east of Ypres to Roulers, the British gaining the line from Armentières north through Ypres to Dixmude. Before the German concentration in the north was completed all the gaps in the Allied line to the sea had closed.

The German attempt to break through began on October 17th and lasted until November 17th. It

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was made by probably six hundred thousand troops, most of them new divisions, although they were supported by Rupprecht's Bavarian army, and the Prussian Guard was hurried up from the south eventually to take part in the five-day assault on Ypres.

German tactics had not yet changed. Heavy mass formations were used in attack, and the casualties corresponded with the ardour and courage of the troops, which all observers admitted to be high. Germany was at that time in a hysterical ferment of rage against England. It was the day of Ernst Lissauer's *Hymn of Hate* with its refrain

We have all but a single hate,  
We have all but a single foe:  
England.

It was the day of the first Zeppelin attacks on British cities and of the first naval bombardments of Britain's open coast towns. The effects of this obsession were shown in the brutal proclamations of Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria to the German Sixth Army. They were also manifested, perhaps, in the sustained fury of the German attacks.

The first blow fell on the Belgians and French who held the lines from Dixmude to the sea. Here Generals Foch and Grossetti performed wonders. They were greatly outnumbered, but held on by utilizing all the

advantages of a terrain strikingly adapted to defence. In this flat, soggy region artillery was handicapped and the German infantry was cut to pieces advancing in masses across the open. By sheer weight the Germans finally took Dixmude and passed the Yser River. But they were stopped when the Belgians dammed the river near its mouth, where British warships covered their positions, and flooded the lowlands. This overflow barrier proved effective for the rest of the war.

Further south the Germans tried, early in November, to crush the famous Ypres salient. They drove the British back from the neighbourhood of Roulers and took the heights east and south-east of Ypres. But they were never able to reach the city itself—a mass of ruins—which held out then just as it held out later, though in dire straits, against the German attacks of April, 1915, and April, 1918. Apparently indefensible, commanded on two sides by the Passchendaele and Messines ridges, it was nevertheless defended by the sheer grit of that army which in the early days of the war William II had scornfully characterized as “contemptible.”

The battle of Flanders cost the Germans vastly greater losses than the first battle of the Marne did. It was the death-blow to the old German system of battle tactics. It proved that dense masses of infantry

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could not of their own strength break through trench lines held by much inferior forces. Modern weapons had too greatly augmented the power of the defensive to beat down frontal infantry attacks. Henceforth—at least on the West Front, where the quality of the opposing troops was fairly equal—frontal attacks would prove futile until some new devices had been found for restoring superiority to the offensive. The new problems of trench deadlock had to be faced and solved. And the real solution was not to come until three years later—at the battle of Cambrai.

Lieutenant-General Baron Freytag-Loringhoven intimates, in his *Deductions from the World War*, that the Germans lost the battles of the Yser and of Ypres because they used too many new formations. “These new troops,” he holds, “could not be equal to coping with the difficult conditions which prevailed at Ypres.”

He says further:

In their case the period of training was not really adequate to transform them into thoroughly efficient battle-troops. The experience of the officers, very few of whom were on the active list at the time, with all their good will, was not really adequate and the same was true of their physical fitness. This applies equally to a large proportion of the men in the ranks, that is to say, of the young war volunteers. They

had excellent qualities and were filled with the purest patriotic enthusiasm, but this could not compensate for the lack of soldierly discipline and physical hardening which can be acquired only in the course of a thorough military training.

A curious apology! Opposed to the Germans in Flanders was a motley force of very uneven quality—of many races, tongues, and degrees of military experience. It fought day in and day out, with only the scantiest reserves. The Germans had ample reserves. They also sent to Belgium Crown Prince Rupprecht's first-line Bavarian army and the Prussian Guard. If the Channel ports were worth taking sound leadership would have forbidden an attempt to take them with second-class troops, while better troops were holding the line from Arras down to Belfort, on which the fighting had died down.

Here again, as at the Marne, the German High Command undervalued the enemy. Freytag-Loringhoven criticizes Joffre for not extending his line north more rapidly. But Joffre had relatively small reserves on hand in October, 1914. He was forced to do the best he could with what he had. The German High Command, on the contrary, had a choice. It cannot excuse itself for failure on the ground that it preferred to employ new formations instead of seasoned ones.

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The Flanders campaign ended, as the Marne campaign did, in a big German reverse. The second German bid for a decisive success on the West Front failed. The Allies, rallying in the nick of time, saved the Channel ports, as they had saved Paris two months before. It was demonstrated for a second time that Germany had only a gambler's chance to overrun and conquer France.

But again the Allied victory was only negative in results. It was another victory of arrest. It left with the Germans the fruits of a second offensive campaign. Practically all of Belgium was lost to the Entente. Germany secured the strip of seacoast which she coveted as a base for submarine warfare and for air raids on England. She also obtained a free hand for her experiment of segregating the Flemings from the Walloons, claiming kinship in race and language with the former and attempting to segregate them in a pro-Teuton Flemish state. The iron and steel industries centering about Liège were taken over by the German Government. Belgian banking resources were attached. Belgian labour was impressed and deported beyond the Rhine and the non-labouring population was left dependent for food on the charity of neutrals and the Allies.

After the Flanders campaign Belgium's existence

as an independent state was suspended. The German inroads into Northern France also had very grave consequences. Ninety per cent. of the iron ore produced in France came from the Briey and Longwy basins, which were both overrun by Germany before the battle of the Marne. Seventy per cent. of the coal mined in France came from the Valenciennes basin, lost to the Germans in the Flanders campaign. The steel, textile, and sugar industries of France were concentrated largely in the invaded regions. The Germans plundered and devastated these regions. Northern France suffered damage under German occupation estimated at \$13,000,000,000. Belgium suffered to the extent of \$2,000,000,000 in devastation and \$2,000,000,000 more in spoliation and military tribute.

These penalties were incidental to the purely military penalties. The Germans secured a foothold deep within the enemy's territory from which they were not dislodged until the closing days of the war. Even when the armistice was signed more than three fourths of the German western armies were on foreign soil. The positions which they had seized in Northern France were admirably suited to a long defensive campaign. They were equally suited to new offensive operations against Paris and the Channel ports.

If the Marne and Flanders offensives had failed to

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bring anything like a decision over the Allies they had at least carried the war far beyond the German frontier (except in Lorraine and Alsace), put staggering burdens on France and Belgium, and assured Germany complete strategic freedom by safeguarding her western border.

It was evident by the end of November, 1914, that neither antagonist was able to exhaust or crush the other in the West. Each had underestimated the other's strength. Moltke lost a great strategical opportunity at the Marne. Joffre lost one after the German retreat to the Aisne. Freytag-Loringhoven makes this curious admission:

This war has furnished instances where the envelopment of a whole host might have been effected and would have had far-reaching consequences. Such an opportunity was presented to our opponents on the Western Front after the battle of the Marne. By making use of their convenient and efficient railway network and their numerous columns of motor cars they might have hurled at the proper moment powerful forces against the right flank of the German army, and thereby prevented us from establishing our positions on the Aisne and to the west of the Belgian frontier. Since, however, they had not achieved a tactical success at the Marne at all, they lacked the strength and capacity for such an undertaking. They pressed their attack only in a frontal direction. The German forces at once



resumed in part an offensive attitude and by this means arrested the progress of the enemy forces opposed to them. They strengthened the right wing of their army and were always able to oppose adequate forces to the striking movement of the French pursuing army when the latter at length (but too late) set itself in motion.

Neither side had in the West in 1914 the leadership or the numbers with which to establish a real superiority. The Germans, therefore, wisely decided at the end of 1914 to turn to the East—in spite of the fact that the results of the Western fighting had been, on the whole, largely in their favour. They had a freedom of choice and they sought a field in which a decision promised to be quicker and easier. The Allies had little choice and slight strategic freedom. The French were tied down to home defence. The British lacked the confidence, and to some extent the numbers, to turn away resolutely from the West. The Gallipoli expedition of 1915 represented only a lame and hastily improvised effort to do so.

The advantages of Germany's geographical position now came into full play. She sealed up her West Front and took up the more vital and promising task of destroying Russia.

## CHAPTER IX

### RUSSIA'S EARLY SUCCESSES

RUSSIA was the chief puzzle of the first year of the war. Up to May 1, 1915, she had apparently accomplished more than any other of the belligerents. She had almost held her own against Germany. She had won a striking series of victories over Austria-Hungary. She had taken more than three hundred thousand prisoners, including the Przemysl garrison of 130,000 men.

Russia's line of mobilization ran north and south, through Brest-Litovsk, near the eastern boundary of Poland. That line was her true military frontier. Poland jutted out from it in an almost indefensible salient. The Russians had an advanced front on the Vistula, from Ivangorod north through Warsaw to Novogeorgievsk; thence turning north-east through Ossowiec and Augustovo to Kovno, on the Niemen. All of Poland to the west of this front was conceded to the Germans.

This advanced line was endangered by the fact that

Poland was inclosed on three sides by German and Austrian territory. Warsaw could be taken in the rear by an enemy advance out of Galicia toward Lublin. The Austro-Hungarians took that route in August, 1914, getting as far as Krasnik. Their strategy was good. It failed only because the Russians countered with an offensive in Eastern Galicia which broke through the Austro-Hungarian front about Lemberg and drove Francis Joseph's armies in disorder back across the San River and the Carpathians.

In the first nine months of the war the Russians pushed their lines west well beyond Warsaw, in Poland, and almost to Cracow in Western Galicia. They held more enemy territory in the East than the Germans had overrun in the West. The Germans occupied about 8000 square miles of France and 11,000 square miles of Belgium. But Russia had not only taken firm possession of most of Poland, but had captured 35,000 square miles of Austrian territory in Galicia and Bukowina.

Many causes contributed to Russia's brilliant showing. Her mobilization was already under way when the war began. She had started to organize her southwestern front as soon as it was evident that Austria-Hungary was trying to pick a quarrel with Serbia. Her military preparations were really more advanced

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than Austria-Hungary's were. Her armies in the opening weeks of the war easily outnumbered those of Austria-Hungary.

Teuton diplomatic blunders had helped Russia. Rumania was long an adjunct to the Triple Alliance. Her sovereign was a Hohenzollern. Her people disliked and feared Russia, which had treated Rumania very shabbily after the war with Turkey in 1877-78, depriving her of Bessarabia. The Rumanians looked to Berlin for protection against Slav ambitions. But policy at Vienna was largely controlled by Hungary, and Hungary was notorious as an oppressor of her subject peoples, among whom were the Rumanians of Transylvania. The Rumanian Government could not remain indifferent to the wrongs of Latin kinsmen across the Hungarian border. So an intense friction developed between Vienna and Bucharest.

In the second Balkan War Austria-Hungary sided with Bulgaria and sought to annul the terms of peace imposed on Bulgaria by Rumania, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro. That interference detached Rumania from the Triple Alliance. Her relations with Russia became more friendly, and it was plain from the beginning of the war that she would either remain neutral or side with the Allies.

Russia was therefore relieved from the necessity of

guarding the Bessarabian frontier, just as France had been relieved by Italy's alienation from the Triple Alliance of the necessity of guarding Nice and Savoy. Austria-Hungary, on the contrary, not only had to fight Serbia on the south, but also to keep watch on Rumania and Italy, her former allies. All Russia's forces in the south could be concentrated for an invasion of Bukowina and Galicia.

The Russian army had learned some hard lessons in the Japanese War. General Kuropatkin, though a non-aggressive commander-in-chief, was an intelligent soldier. After the Japanese War he prepared reports for the government in which he frankly exposed the deficiencies of the Russian military system. Steps were taken to remedy some of these. The Japanese War had been intensely unpopular. But even before the Balkan wars there was a striking rebirth in Russia of nationalistic and Pan-Slavic feeling, under the influence of which the military establishment was expanded and materially improved. New and friendly relations with Great Britain had reawakened Russian ambitions in the Balkans and aroused fresh hopes of a triumphant entry into Constantinople.

Russia saw trouble with Austria-Hungary and Germany coming and was at least superficially prepared for it. When the war clouds broke the Czar had a

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formidable army ready for service on his western frontier. He had a partially competent officers' corps and a fairly good General Staff. His forces were moderately well supplied with artillery and with munitions, which were used lavishly while they lasted. Nothing, of course, could overcome the inherent weakness of a national army recruited from an inert and backward population like Russia's. But this handicap, as well as the scantiness of material out of which good commissioned and non-commissioned officers could be created, did not make its effect felt disastrously until the spring of 1915.

In the war plans originally drawn by the French and Russian general staffs Russia was to put in the field at once about 1,600,000 men. Half of these were to be used in containing the 900,000 Austro-Hungarians expected to mobilize on the Eastern Front. The other half were to be used in attacking Germany—the "principal enemy."

Russia exceeded her mobilization programme. She probably had 1,800,000 men in the field in August, 1914. But she used less than half of these against Germany. Two Russian armies entered East Prussia about the middle of August. The first, under Rennenkampf, crossed the Niemen and moved west toward Königsberg. It won the battle of Gumbinnen and

pressed on beyond Insterburg. The second army, under Samsonoff, advanced north-west out of Poland, threatening the line of the Vistula north of Thorn. This army was badly handled, and in the last week in August walked into a trap at Tannenberg, where it was partially enveloped and routed by Hindenburg, who had been put in command of the German forces in the East. The Russian losses were probably above 125,000.

This striking victory caught the German imagination and started Hindenburg's colossal vogue as the German War God. No very clear accounts were furnished of the battle of Tannenberg. The German public accepted a legendary version of it, just as it accepted the wholesale fabrications of Russian outrages in East Prussia. The series of booklets on the campaigns and battles of the war, issued for popular consumption by the German General Staff, is as silent about Tannenberg as it is about the battle of the Marne.

Dr. Mühlon recounts in his diary one of the blood-curdling stories circulated in Germany to add to Hindenburg's glory. He writes under the date of October 5, 1914:

What did Hindenburg's troops do when they triumphed over the Russians? The story goes from mouth to mouth. It was not enough that the enemy

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was driven into the swamps; tens of thousands of them who wished to surrender and sought to clamber out of the morass were pushed back at the bayonet's point, until they were suffocated and drowned. This was done under orders. Quarter was not to be given. One could not make use at home of so many prisoners. For days and nights the cries of the drowning were heard above the thunder of the cannon; and many a soldier who was obliged to listen to this clamour of desperation lost his reason. Ninety thousand prisoners were taken in that battle; but it is said that still more were murdered as they lay helpless and pleading for aid.

Mühlton doesn't vouch for the truth of this story. Hindenburg was credited a year or more later with admitting that it was a mere fiction.

General Basil Gourko, who commanded *Rennenkampf's* cavalry, says in his book *War and Revolution in Russia*, published in English in 1919, that the two corps of Samsonoff's army which were lost were surrounded in Tannenberg forest. Samsonoff himself, trying to escape on foot in the night, became separated from his staff and died in the woods, Gourko thinks from heart failure. The story which Mühlton repeats is evidently a grotesque counterpart of the legend which represents the Prussian Guard as engulfed in the St. Gond marshes at the battle of the Marne.

Tannenberg was a smashing reverse for the Russians.



It ended the Entente dream of a Russian offensive against Germany—of a Cossack march to Berlin across the Vistula and the Oder. It was made evident in the very first month of the war that Russia no longer ranked with Germany as a military power. She could not fight the Germans on equal terms. Her superiority in numbers was more than offset by her inferiority in leadership, organization, and military efficiency.

Russia could never hope to crush Germany. But a sound instinct led her to believe that she could come near to crushing Austria-Hungary. Even before Tannenberg she had decided to depart from the strategic plan agreed on with the French General Staff. She resolved to make her chief effort against the Austro-Hungarian armies, instead of merely containing them. The "secondary enemy" was converted into the "principal enemy." Conditions on the Austrian front had changed since 1892 and the change was all in Russia's favour. Austria-Hungary was unable in August, 1914, to put 900,000 men on the Eastern battle line. She was too much tied up with the Serbian campaign to do so. Her forces in Galicia and Bukowina numbered hardly 700,000. Against them the Russians had concentrated probably 1,100,000.

Moreover, the Austrian High Command played into Russia's hand. It had undertaken an offensive in

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Poland far too ambitious for its resources. General Dankl's army moved north from the San River into the Lublin gap, intending to take the Warsaw-Ivan-gorod line in the rear. In order to keep in touch with Dankl's forces Auffenberg was obliged to extend dangerously the left wing of the army covering Lemberg.

Russia had three armies to Austria-Hungary's two. One, under Ivanoff, moved west from Brest-Litovsk to defend Lublin. The other two, under Russky and Brusiloff, respectively, converged on Lemberg, from the north-east, east, and south-east. Auffenberg's line was first broken and turned at its southern end, about Halicz, on the Dniester River. That reverse forced a general withdrawal and the evacuation of Lemberg.

Auffenberg next made a stand on the line from Grodek, north to Rawa-Russka, where his front adjoined Dankl's. Russky then broke and turned Auffenberg's position at its northern end and created a gap between his army and Dankl's. Ivanoff threw himself on Dankl. The Austrians were routed at every point, retreating south across the Carpathians and west toward Cracow. About 200,000 Austrian prisoners were taken. The total Austrian casualties were probably over 300,000.

These brilliant victories obscured the disaster at Tannenberg. They restored Russia's prestige, and,

since they coincided with Joffre's success at the Marne, they raised unwarranted hopes of a real Franco-Russian military concert directed against the "principal enemy power." These hopes were extinguished in the West when the Germans rallied at the Aisne, conquered practically all of Belgium, and extended their hold on Northern France. They were extinguished in the East when the Russian campaign in Western Poland failed late in November in the very confused operations about Lodz.

For a time, however, after the Lemberg victories, while the Austro-Hungarians were recuperating and the Germans were organizing new formations behind the Vistula fortresses, the Russian offensive showed considerable vitality. The armies in Galicia crossed the San, invested Przemysl, pushed west toward Cracow and south-west to the passes of the Carpathians. The Austrians could not stop them unaided. But Germany was able to suspend Russian progress in the south by sending Hindenburg east from Silesia in a dash for Warsaw, while a supporting Austrian army marched from the north of Cracow for Ivangorod.

This was Hindenburg's first Polish counter-offensive. It lasted only three weeks. The Germans got as far as the outskirts of Warsaw and dropped a few shells in the city. But the Russians brought up troops from

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Galicia, crossed the Vistula, and attacked Hindenburg's flanks. He retreated with great rapidity. His manoeuvre, however, had dislocated the Russian front in Galicia, the armies there retiring from the Carpathians and to the east of the San. The siege of Przemyśl was momentarily raised by the Austrians.

When the danger to Warsaw had passed the Russian advance in the south was resumed. It carried the invaders beyond the Dunajec and to within about eight miles of Cracow. At the same time the Russian armies west of the Vistula in Poland approached the Prussian frontier.

This was Russian high tide on the Polish-Galician front. Some Russian cavalry even crossed into Posen. But Hindenburg had now received heavy reinforcements. He used them in a second campaign for Warsaw, attacking the Russians from the direction of Thorn.

Hindenburg turned the northern flank of the armies opposing him in Western Poland. Then a part of his own army was enveloped by Russian forces coming south across the Vistula. Here Rennenkampf failed to take advantage of a great opportunity. After desperate fighting the tangled situation was straightened out by a Russian retirement from Lodz toward Warsaw. Later in December Hindenburg attacked the Russians on their new front and forced them back to the Bzura-

Rawka line, close to the Vistula. There they held on successfully until the following summer.

The battles in Poland in October, November, and December proved that, although the Russians were incapable of a sustained offensive against the Germans, they could at least meet and repel German attacks. Hindenburg had used against them the old tactics of massed infantry assault—the same that had failed so disastrously on the West Front in the battles of the Yser and of Ypres. He had now nearly equal numbers and the benefit of an admirable network of strategic railroads in his rear. But he had not acquired that vast superiority in artillery which was needed to break through intrenched fronts. As in the Japanese War, the Russian armies were sluggish and uncertain on the offensive, but tenacious on the defensive. The trench warfare deadlock, which began on the East Front also in the fall of 1914, did much to neutralize temporarily the defects in Russia's military organization.

After January, 1915, the German High Command turned to the East for the decision which it had missed in the West. Many new divisions were assigned to Hindenburg and vast stores of supplies were accumulated in Posen, Silesia, and West Prussia. The first sign of this change in German policy came in the continuance of operations in the East all through the win-

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ter of 1914-15, although in the West the fighting died down to almost nothing. It was probably Germany's primary aim to wear out Russia's fragile military machine—to deplete her artillery and munitions reserves, leaving her undersupplied in the spring and thus nullifying Russian superiority in crude man power.

Berlin had now assumed complete control of the Austro-Hungarian armies. In January German divisions were sent into Hungary to quiet Magyar unrest and to threaten Serbia and Rumania. A large part of Bukowina<sup>4</sup> was recaptured and Austro-Hungarian forces were set in motion to relieve Przemyśl.

In the north Hindenburg continued into February his attacks on the lines defending Warsaw. Then he moved around into East Prussia to meet a second Russian invasion. This ended, as the first one did, in a severe Russian defeat. In the Battle of the Mazurian Lakes, fought in the midst of midwinter storms, Hindenburg repeated his Tannenberg strategy of envelopment and captured forty thousand prisoners. For the third time he demonstrated the hopelessness of any Russian offensive against Germany. But, though Hindenburg could smash the Russians in open fighting, he could not break through their defence of Warsaw. He made one more effort in February and March, this time from the north—and once more failed.

Przemysl, the great Austrian stronghold near the San, surrendered on March 22, 1915. The Russians starved it out. They lacked the big howitzers which Germany had used to reduce Liège, Namur, Maubeuge, and Antwerp. They lacked proper siege trains. So they sat down and waited patiently for the fortress to fall, meanwhile frustrating Austro-Hungarian attempts to relieve it.

It was a sensational capitulation—the most sensational of the sort during the war. But the Allied publics greatly misjudged its meaning. The capture of Przemysl was not due to Russian skill and vigour, but to Austrian incompetency. Przemysl should never have been held. There might have been some excuse for throwing an army into it during the hurried retreat from Lemberg early in September, on the theory that the necessity of investing the fortress would check the Russian pursuit.

When Joffre retreated from the Belgian border in August, 1914, he left a garrison of forty thousand men in Maubeuge. They were able to hold out less than two weeks. They did impede the German pursuit a little and left Moltke several divisions short at the Marne. But history will probably say that the results did not justify Joffre in sacrificing forty thousand French troops at Maubeuge.

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History can have no hesitation whatever about Przemyśl. Its garrison never played any considerable rôle in checking the Russian irruption into Central Galicia. The troops interned within its fortified zone served no important strategical or tactical purpose. And after the Austrians were lucky enough to interrupt the first investment in October, 1914, it should have been furthest from their thoughts to run the risks of a second investment. Fortresses everywhere had proved to be nothing but man traps. But General Conrad Hötzenendorff, the Austrian chief of staff, was too thorough an Austrian to profit by experience. He didn't dismantle and abandon Przemyśl when he had the chance to do so. Instead, he left Kusmanek's army cooped up in the scantily provisioned stronghold when he retreated a second time across the Carpathians.

The long-drawn-out siege of Przemyśl was, in fact, a striking symptom of Russia's failing strength. Liège, Namur, Maubeuge, and Antwerp all fell within two weeks after investment. Przemyśl held out for nearly five months. The Russians lacked the means to reduce it. But this salient fact was overlooked in the Allied rejoicings which followed its surrender. The outside world, ignorant of the preparations which Germany was making for a spectacular Eastern campaign, looked now for a new series of Russian successes which would



carry the Czar's armies across the Carpathians into the Hungarian plains.

The Grand Duke Nicholas himself seemed to think that he could plough his way through the mountain passes and threaten Budapest and Vienna. He had already begun the Battle of the Carpathians. After the surrender of Przemyśl he redoubled his efforts. He concentrated his attack on the two westernmost passes, Lupkow and Dukla. The last named was the lowest and most open of all the Carpathian passages. Here the Russians actually got through the mountains and occupied positions on the south side of the range.

But by the end of March Austrian demoralization was over. The Germans had reorganized and stiffened the Austro-Hungarian armies. The completion of mobilization had filled up the ranks. While holding fast at Dukla and Lupkow, the forces of the Central Powers took the offensive along the rest of the Carpathian line and gradually got a footing on the northern slopes. The Russian offensive slowed down and stopped. A couple of weeks of inaction intervened. Then Hindenburg and Mackensen launched the tremendous assault on the Dunajec, east of Cracow, which started the Russian retreat to the Dvina River and the Pinsk marshes.

At the end of April Russia still had more men on the

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Polish-Galician front than the Teutonic allies had. She had a resourceful commander in chief in the Grand Duke Nicholas. She had competent army commanders in Alexieff, Ivanoff, Brusiloff, and Russky. But in the continuous fighting since August she had suffered almost irreparable losses in regimental officers and first line troops. The new divisions, recruited rapidly from the heterogeneous races and peoples of the empire, were of uneven quality and unequal to the intensified demands of modern warfare.

Kuropatkin, after the Japanese War, expressed grave doubts of the ability of a Russian national army to hold its own against the armies of Germany and Austria-Hungary. In a report to the Czar on the Manchurian campaign he wrote:

Undoubtedly universal military service has, from a moral standpoint, improved the mass of our troops, but in view of the low standard of civilization of the individual men it is difficult to infuse them with the notion of discipline. Belief in God, devotion to the Czar, love for the Fatherland, still contribute to keep the soldiers firm in the ranks and to make them brave and obedient fighters, but these feelings have in recent times been severely shaken and forcibly wrested from the heart of the Russians.

The Russian armies at the beginning of the war did much to discredit Kuropatkin's forebodings.

But as time passed inherent defects became more obvious.

Lieutenant-General Baron Freytag-Loringhoven says in his book, *A Nation Trained in Arms or a Militia?*:

In the ten years' interval between the Peace of Portsmouth and the outbreak of the world war much had been done to promote the war preparedness of the Russian army. But, though individual improvements were effected, it was impossible to infuse a new spirit into a national army of gigantic size within the space of ten years, more especially in view of the low standard of culture and the apathetic temperament of the Russian people. Owing to its insensibility to losses and defeats, as well as to the moral effects of retreat, the Russian army maintained its cohesion even in the most difficult situations. Nevertheless, the unwieldy character of the Russian masses showed itself just as it had done in previous wars. In spite of the popular notion of the inexhaustible supply of the Russian reserves, the number of thoroughly trained men who could be sent to the front grew less and less as time went on, so that the efficiency of the army steadily declined.

Again in his *Deductions from the World War* the same author says:

The Russian army had learned much from the Manchurian campaign, both as regards organization and also as regards strategy and tactics. It had

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been systematically organized and prepared for the war against Germany and Austria-Hungary. Nevertheless, the defects in the political organism of the empire and in the national character could not be remedied in a decade. . . . The world war, no less than the March revolution of the present year [1917] though in a different sense, has revealed that Russia was not really ripe for universal military service. Had it been otherwise we and our Allies might have been unable to defend ourselves against envelopment of overwhelmingly superior numbers.

Worst of all, the deteriorating Russian army of April, 1915, lacked artillery and munitions. Russia had spent lavishly what she had in nine months of continuous fighting. At the beginning of the year, an urgent appeal had been made to France and Great Britain for assistance. The greatest need of the Allies was a connected Eastern and Western Front—a short-cut through the Dardanelles by which munitions, big guns, and a stiffening of Western troops could flow uninterruptedly into Russia.

France was too much tied up on her own soil to do anything. Great Britain, however, heeded Russia's appeal to the extent of undertaking to force the Dardanelles. Had the straits been opened in March, 1915, Russia could probably have been sustained in Galicia and Poland and the great retreat of the following summer prevented.

But the naval attack on the Dardanelles and the Gallipoli military expedition both failed. Russia was left in an exposed, over-extended position, while her power was steadily weakening. She had gallantly borne more than her share of the Allied burden. She had had great and surprising successes in the field. But she had shot her bolt. There was a touch of illusion in her victories. Cut off from the West, she could not maintain an unequal struggle with Germany. After Gallipoli the chance to develop her vast manpower and use it efficiently was definitively lost to the Allies.

## CHAPTER X

### THE TRAGEDY OF GALLIPOLI

FOR the Allies the Dardanelles campaign was the most poignant tragedy of the war. It was the defeat which counted most heavily against them. Failure to force the straits in the winter and spring of 1915 blasted the one real hope the Entente had of establishing a continuous front.

The capture of Constantinople would have given the Western Powers easy access to Odessa and Kiev, the bases of the Russian armies operating in Bukowina and Galicia. It would have prevented Bulgaria's entry into the war as an ally of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Turkey, being completely isolated, would have been compelled to sue for peace. Serbia would have been saved. Rumania could have joined the Entente without risk to herself. The war could have been carried to the Danube and the border of Transylvania and an iron circle could have been drawn about Germany and Austria-Hungary from the North Sea to Switzerland, through the Italian Alps, across the

Adriatic, and up through Hungary, Galicia, and Poland to the Baltic.

Excluding Foch's final campaign, the Dardanelles expedition was therefore the most vital offensive operation undertaken by the Allies. If it had succeeded, it would have changed the whole course of the war. By winning Constantinople early in 1915, the Entente combination would probably have been able to defeat the two-power Teuton combination without help from the United States.

Because the sea and land operations at Gallipoli were dismal fiascos many Allied writers have vastly underrated their importance. The whole enterprise has been cavalierly brushed aside as an egregious strategical blunder. Such a view is unwarranted. The strategy of the Dardanelles campaign was eminently sound. The British War Council was on the right track. It was experimenting with a big and bold idea. The fault was not in the plan, but in the execution.

If there had been a Farragut in command of the Allied fleet in the Dardanelles, the passage to Constantinople would have been forced. But no Farragut was in sight. Overcaution replaced that calm, collected daring which inspired the running of the forts of the Lower Mississippi and of Mobile Bay.

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The Turkish defences in the Dardanelles were no more impassable than were Forts St. Philip and Jackson or Forts Morgan and Gaines. Yet the British Admiralty and the British commander-in-chief on the spot didn't balance with sufficient imagination the penalties of failure against the far-reaching military consequences of success. It was one of those moments in history which wait for the instinct of genius to manifest itself and which so often wait in vain!

Conditions in the winter of 1914-15 were, in fact, highly favourable to an Allied attempt to reach Constantinople. Turkey had been forced into the war prematurely by Baron Wangenheim, the German Ambassador, who wanted to make sure that the Dardanelles would be barred to ingoing French and British and outgoing Russian shipping. Hostilities began late in October, following a surprise naval raid, under German management, on the Russian Black Sea ports. A week before the raid was made Wangenheim had induced the Turkish Government to close navigation through the straits.

Turkey and Bulgaria were expected to take joint action. But Ferdinand was not ready to show his hand until the autumn of 1915. So Turkey remained cut off for months from direct and easy communication with Austria-Hungary. The main railroad line south



ran through Serbia from Belgrade to Nish; and all Serbia was then in the hands of the Serbians. Rumania had declared a strict neutrality and put a ban on the passage of war material across her territory. German soldiers came freely to Constantinople in mufti. But the shipment of munitions was limited and difficult. And without a fair supply of shells for the Dardanelles forts the straits could not be held against a vigorous naval attack.

On January 2, 1915, the Russian Government strongly urged Great Britain and France to make a campaign against Constantinople. Whether or not the Turks heard of this message through German spies, Constantinople was greatly perturbed all through January. *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* gives a vivid picture of conditions in the Turkish capital in that panicky period. According to his testimony the belief was general that the Allied fleet would attack and would get through. Wangenheim shared both these apprehensions. So, to some extent, did Goltz, the German supervisor of the Turkish military establishment. On this point the American envoy writes:

I find in my diary Goltz's precise opinion, as reported to me by Wangenheim, and I quote it exactly as it was written at that time: "Although he thought it was almost impossible to force the Dar-

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danelles, still, if England thought it an important move, of the general war, they could, by sacrificing ten ships, force the entrance, and do it very fast, and be up in the Marmora within ten hours from the time they forced it."

The Turkish Government made feverish preparations to move to Eski-Shehr in Asia Minor. Wangenheim and Pallavicini, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, both urged the Turkish Cabinet to go to Adrianople instead. But Talaat Pasha considered Eski-Shehr safer. There was only one Turkish or Teuton official who maintained that Constantinople wasn't in any danger. That was the swashbuckling Enver Pasha. But he was under a cloud, having just returned from his disastrous Caucasus campaign against the Russians. He found no listeners. The panic in Constantinople continued, in fact, all through February. After the Allied fleets had destroyed the forts at the entrance of the straits on February 19th, there was a lively exodus from the city.

The British War Council had considered on November 25, 1914, the question of forcing the Dardanelles. Many Allied war vessels were already in the Eastern Mediterranean. They still enjoyed complete freedom of movement there, since German and Austrian submarines had not yet made their way out of the Adriatic.

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The *Queen Elizabeth*, with her 15-inch guns, was dispatched to the Ægean to enhance the superiority of the fleet's armament over the semi-obsolete armament of the forts.

It was intended originally to make a joint land and sea attack. The troops were to come from Egypt where the British were awaiting a Turkish attempt to rush the Suez Canal. Egypt was heavily garrisoned and it was a simple matter to transport an army from Alexandria to bases in the Ægean Islands. It was also just as feasible to defend Egypt by fighting the Turk at Gallipoli as by fighting him in the Sinai Desert.

Earl Kitchener, the British Secretary of State for War, who exercised an autocratic control over military affairs, announced in January, after the Russian appeal arrived, that there were no troops immediately available for the Dardanelles operation. So, on January 13th, the British War Council decided to risk a purely naval attack. By the first week in February the Allies had concentrated off the island of Imbros one super-dreadnought, the *Queen Elizabeth*; one battle-cruiser, the *Inflexible*; sixteen pre-dreadnoughts and nine cruisers (all of the above British); seven pre-dreadnoughts and three cruisers (French), and one Russian cruiser. There was an adequate comple-

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ment of destroyers, mine-sweepers, and submarines.

The Dardanelles passage is about sixty miles long. At the Ægean end it is about two miles wide. Here the Turks had some antiquated fortifications on the opposite sides of the entrance. They were incapable of defence and were quickly knocked to pieces by the Allied fleet, standing eight or nine miles out to sea. Inside the entrance the straits broaden out to perhaps four miles. Then they gradually contract. About fourteen miles up are the Dardanelles narrows. Here the passage is only a mile wide, and hills rise abruptly from the shores. This stretch, ideal for defensive purposes, was studded with forts. It constituted the main barrier to the sea of Marmora. A mine field stretched down through the narrows into the lower part of the straits.

The most important Turkish fortification was the Anadolu Hamidieh battery, on the Anatolian side. It was situated on an elevation near Nagara Point, facing south, and commanded the whole lower stretch of the straits. Its guns were of the Krupp model of 1885, and had an extreme range of about nine miles. About three miles farther south, on the Anatolian side, was the Dardanos battery, of Krupp guns of the model of 1905, reinforced by some naval guns taken from the *Goeben* and from the Turkish war vessels,

laid up off Constantinople. The batteries on the European shore were of minor importance.

The fortifications at the entrance to the straits were destroyed on February 19th. Thereafter the Allied ships moved into the straits, sweeping the mines and bombarding the Turkish forts from Dardanos north. The Allied guns outranged the Turkish by one or two miles and the ships were able to keep beyond the danger line. But they made little impression on the Turkish batteries by this long-distance bombardment.

The first and only real effort to close in came on March 18th. The attack was a surprise to the world at large, which had come to the conclusion that the Allied fleet was being used merely to clear the way for a land expedition. The tradition had been established that no fleet could safely destroy or run modern land batteries.

The results of the assault of March 18th seemed to confirm this theory. The Allies lost three pre-dreadnoughts—the French *Bouvet* and the British *Irresistible* and *Ocean*. All these were sunk by mines, although the *Bouvet* was also hit by shells from Hamidieh. The British battle-cruiser *Inflexible* and the French pre-dreadnought *Gaulois* were also damaged by gun fire.

The losses, which were at once admitted, caused great concern. But they were less serious than they

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seemed to be. Goltz had fixed the price of a successful attack at ten ships. Moreover, the all-day action of March 18th had greatly improved the fleet's chances. For the real justification of the Allied attack was the well-founded presumption that the Turks were short of munitions. The Allies could replace the ships which were sunk; but the Turks could not replace the shells which had been shot away.

I wrote in an article which appeared in the *New York Tribune* of March 21, 1915:

The Allied fleet has today a clearer idea of the difficulties ahead of it. Yet the losses it has suffered do not prove that it is unequal to the task of reducing the forts and forcing a passage of the straits. The three battleships lost were sunk by mines floating out on a swift current. The guns of the forts have apparently not yet seriously damaged a single big warship.

The fleet has the advantage in range and weight of projectiles. If it takes its time, it can destroy the forts bit by bit. But that the Turks have a sufficient supply of ammunition for their land batteries is a pretty extravagant assumption. Every day of hard fighting will bring the stock in hand nearer to the point of exhaustion, and if the forts fail the mine fields can be easily reached and cleared.

That was unorthodox in judgment and doctrine. From the standpoint of current naval opinion the Allied

withdrawal seemed at the time to prove it unsound. But testimony which has come to light later shows that it was perfectly sound. Ambassador Morgenthau, in his volume of reminiscences, candidly exposes the hopeless situation of the Turkish defence on March 19th. He had visited and inspected the Dardanelles forts on March 15th and 16th. He talked freely with the Turkish commanders and officials, having made the trip as the guest of Enver Pasha. He also had other sources of information. He writes:

Let us suppose that the Allies had returned, say on the morning of the 19th, what would have happened? The one overwhelming fact is that the fortifications were very short of ammunition. They had almost reached the limit of their resisting power when the British fleet passed out on the afternoon of the 18th. I had secured permission for Mr. George A. Schreiner, the well-known American correspondent of the Associated Press, to visit the Dardanelles on this occasion. On the night of the 18th this correspondent discussed the situation with General Mertens, who was chief technical officer at the straits. General Mertens admitted that the outlook was very discouraging for the defence.

"We expect that the British will come back early tomorrow morning," he said, "and if they do, we may be able to hold out for a few hours."

General Mertens did not declare in so many words that the ammunition was practically exhausted, but Mr. Schreiner discovered that such was the case.

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The fact was that Fort Hamidieh, the most powerful defence on the Asiatic side, had just seventeen armour-piercing shells left, while at Kilid-ul-Bahr, which was the main defence on the European side, there were precisely ten.

"I should advise you to get up at six o'clock tomorrow morning," said General Mertens, "and take to the Anatolian Hills. That's what we are going to do."

Mr. Schreiner in his book, *Berlin to Bagdad*, tells the same story in slightly different words. He reports Mertens as saying:

It'll go bad with us if the Allies return tomorrow. They have lost heavily today, to be sure. But I think I know the British well enough to feel that they will be back bright and early. If you have anything around here you wish to save, take my advice and pack it tonight. Be ready to get out of here early in the morning.

What deterred the Allied fleet from going back? Vice-Admiral Carden was sick when the attack was made. Vice-Admiral de Robeck, who commanded in his place, wrote in a report, made on March 19th:

The power of the fleet to dominate the fortresses by superiority of fire seems to be established. Various other dangers and difficulties will have to be encountered, but nothing has happened which justifies the belief that the loss of the undertaking will exceed what has always been expected and provided for.



Had this judgment been acted on, Constantinople would have fallen; for there was nothing to stop the Allied warships after Fort Hamidieh and Nagara Point had been passed.

Probably the deterrent influence was that extreme disinclination to risk naval losses which prevailed among the technical advisers of the First Lord of the British Admiralty. Lord Fisher, who originally opposed the Dardanelles venture, stated the theory of the naval experts in a memorandum which he prepared for Premier Asquith in January, 1915. He said:

The sole justification of bombardments and attacks of the fleet on fortified places, such as the Dardanelles, is to force a decision at sea. As long as the German High Sea fleet possesses its present strength and splendid gunnery efficiency, so long it is imperative that no operation be undertaken by the British fleet calculated to impair its superiority, which is none too great, in view of the heavy losses already experienced in ships and men, which latter cannot be filled in the period of the war, in which the navy differs materially from the army. Even the older ships should not be risked, for they cannot be lost without losing men and they form the only reserve behind the Great Fleet.

This was a counsel of overcaution. The Allied fleets were always greatly superior to the Teuton fleets. The loss of a dozen pre-dreadnoughts in the Dardanelles

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was of infinitesimal consequence compared with the military advantages which would have resulted from the opening of the straits. Renunciation of the attack cost the Allies billions of treasure and hundreds of thousands of lives. The few obsolescent vessels spared made Great Britain's naval superiority no more secure, and contributed practically nothing toward assuring the Entente's success through the exercise of its superior naval power.

A faint heart somewhere let slip through British fingers a victory which would have been as far-reaching in its results as Trafalgar. It also put on Great Britain the burden of resorting to a land attack to force the straits. Acceptance of defeat by the navy greatly weakened British prestige in the East. In order to restore it the army had to be called in.

A land operation against Constantinople presented many more difficulties than a naval operation did. British naval organization was efficient. In the winter of 1914-15 British military organization was far from efficient. Much time would necessarily be lost getting a sufficient army to Gallipoli. And the Turks could assemble more troops there in a given time than the British could.

To have a fair chance of success the land attack should have come as a surprise and should have been

coincidental with the naval attack. On February 16th, a month after the decision to use the fleet without waiting for the army had been reached, the British War Council determined to make a land campaign against Constantinople. But four days later Earl Kitchener postponed the departure of the 29th Division from England, without even letting the War Council know about it. This caused a delay of three weeks in the arrival of the full expeditionary force. It inevitably reduced the chances of a surprise descent on the Turkish positions.

The Allies in the beginning sent about 120,000 men to the Dardanelles. One Australian and one New Zealand division were transferred from Egypt. With them came East Indians and British Territorials. A British naval division and the 29th Division arrived from England. The French could spare but few troops. They provided some marines, colonials, and foreign legion detachments. The French forces under General d'Amade made a lodgment on the Asiatic side of the entrance to the straits. They were subsequently transferred to the European side.

The Allied army was put ashore on April 25th, more than five weeks after the naval attack had been suspended. The plan of General Ian Hamilton, the British commander, was to get a foothold at the tip of the

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peninsula and on the Ægean shore a little farther up. Then the two British forces would work north and east, converging on the Kilid Bahr Plateau, which dominated the forts in the Narrows.

The great obstacle to the success of this plan was the configuration of the Gallipoli peninsula. There were few landing places where shelter was available, either for the lighters offshore or the troops on the beaches. Excessive losses occurred in the course of the landing operations. And after the troops had established themselves in unsatisfactory positions ashore, they found their road north and east barred by Turkish infantry, holding higher ground, admirably adapted to defence.

The British advanced a few miles from the extreme tip of the peninsula but were held before Achi Baba Heights. The Anzacs (Australians and New Zealanders) made a little progress east toward Sari Bahr. Then a trench war deadlock ensued. Toward the end of May German submarines appeared in the Ægean and the Allied fleet had to take to cover, thus depriving the army of the artillery support which would have been needed to launch a powerful break-through operation like that at Neuve Chapelle.

At this point the British War Council would have been justified in cutting losses and drawing out of

Gallipoli. But the doggedness it had failed to show in using the navy in the straits, it now showed in using the army on the peninsula. Six more divisions were dispatched to support the six originally sent. It was decided to make another attack from a point still farther north—at Suvla Bay—thus taking the Turkish position opposite the Anzacs in the flank and rear.

This was a sensible idea. It was also a fortunate one; for the Turks were caught napping. With better staff organization and more competent leadership General Ian Hamilton might easily have enveloped and crushed the Turks at Sari Bahr as Allenby enveloped and crushed them north of Jerusalem in September, 1918.

But the British army had not yet learned how to make war. The great opportunity at Suvla was frittered away by generals who didn't realize the value of time. The troops fought heroically and captured positions which, if held by proper reinforcements, would have put the British in sight of the Dardanelles narrows.

The Suvla Bay operation began on August 6th and lasted until August 11th or 12th. When it was over General Hamilton appealed to the British Government for more troops. But the War Council was now through. The army was allowed to stay on until

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December—a part of it into January, 1916. But all thought of an offensive against Constantinople was abandoned.

The Dardanelles-Gallipoli expedition was thus one long train of mishaps. A bold and sound strategical conception was wrecked by persistent faults in execution. The British losses were ghastly in comparison with the results achieved. The killed, wounded, and missing numbered about 115,000. Nearly 100,000 more men were incapacitated at one time or another by sickness. Because of its deplorable and costly failure many Allied writers described it as a piece of military madness and denounced its promoters, chief among whom was Winston Churchill, as bungling amateur strategists.

Gallipoli was long used by the "Westerners" as a crushing example of the folly of diverting any of Great Britain's military strength to Eastern fronts. The attitude of the "Westerners" was that the Entente was entitled to do nothing in any other part of the world which might weaken Allied defensives or offensives in France and Belgium. This view was expressed unconditionally by Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, in an article on "The Eastern and Western Controversy" in *The Contemporary Review*, for December, 1918. General Maurice, who was formerly Director

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of Military Operations in the British War Office, said:

There was every justification for the Dardanelles expedition, *provided sufficient force to carry it through successfully could be made available without prejudice to the security of the Western Front*. There was no such military force available in the spring of 1915.

It would be wrong to say that the Dardanelles expedition achieved no results, for it undoubtedly contributed materially to the exhaustion of Turkey and detained around Constantinople large Turkish forces which might otherwise have been attacking us in Egypt or Mesopotamia, or assisting the Germans in Russia. But the results obtained were in no way commensurate with the expenditure of force and there can be little doubt that if the expedition had never been undertaken, victory on the Western Front would have been obtained much sooner.

The fixed idea of the British "Westerners" shines out in those judgments. Yet the mistake of the British Government in 1915 was not in sending too many men to Gallipoli, but in sending too few. The security of the Western Front was not imperilled by the dispatch of British troops to the Ægean. It would not have been imperilled even if British reserves in France had been sent east. For Germany went on the defensive in the West in January, 1915, and remained on the defensive there until February 21, 1916. The second German attack on Ypres, in April, 1915, was only a

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local operation intended to distract attention from the Teuton concentration in Galicia. Neuve Chapelle and Loos—the two British West Front offensives of 1915—were just as futile operations as the operation at Gallipoli.

There was a chance in the East in 1915 to alter the whole character of the war. There was no such chance in the West. Germany boldly seized her opportunity and nearly destroyed the Russian armies. The Allies embraced theirs half-heartedly and failed to take Constantinople. Allied operations on the West Front in 1915 led to nothing. They were only “nibbles.” But control of the Balkans and the Near East and Russian ability to remain in the war were in the balance in the fighting at the Dardanelles and in the Gallipoli gulches.

So far as the Entente of 1915 was concerned it never had the power to compel a decision on the Western Front. Every single soldier who fought at Gallipoli could have been added to Sir John French's armies in Flanders without hastening an Entente victory in the West. The Entente, without the United States, might have won the war by linking up the Western and Russian fronts. It probably could not have won it in the West, after Russia's collapse, except through American assistance.

When Russia was forced out of the struggle the full



strategic significance of the Dardanelles expedition became apparent to the English public. An accounting was demanded. A commission, headed by Lord Cromer, made an investigation and submitted a report on March 8, 1917. It became apparent from the evidence gathered that in 1914 and the early part of 1915 Earl Kitchener was the sole arbiter of British military policy. He dominated the War Council—and usually ignored it. Mr. Churchill described him as “all-powerful, imperturbable, and reserved.” Everybody bowed down to him. “Scarcely any one even ventured to argue with him in the Council,” Mr. Churchill testified.

Kitchener had too many irons in the fire; and his military capacity proved to be limited. He was of the stuff of which most popular idols are made. The British public knew only the Kitchener of Khartoum, the Kitchener of myth; and the politicians and soldiers who came in contact with him also weakly accepted him for a while at the public's valuation.

As the commission could not help discovering, he undertook more than he could possibly accomplish and his administration of the War Office was marked by confusion and inefficiency. He, therefore, was more responsible than any one else for the lack of co-operation at the Dardanelles between the army and the

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navy and for the bungling of the one great strategic opportunity which presented itself to the Entente Powers.

Kitchener was not the man to direct a resolute and carefully organized operation such as was necessary to eject the Turks from the Gallipoli peninsula. Under him, as was testified by Major-General Charles E. Callwell, Director of Military Operations in 1915, the General Staff had "virtually ceased to exist." Great Britain could send to Gallipoli some of the best troops in the world. But she was woefully lacking at that time in the staff machinery needed to get results out of them.

There are two phases of the Gallipoli tragedy which will always stand out blackest. One is the sacrifice to inexperience and incompetency in leadership of splendid troops like the Anzacs. The other is the heart-breaking decision not to send the Allied fleet back into the Narrows on March 19th, when the Hamidieh and Kilid-ul-Bahr batteries had between them only twenty-seven armour-piercing shells left.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CREATION OF MITTEL-EUROPA

IN both the political and the military sense Germany's vital need was always to secure her Continental position. Before William II's time this need had been kept steadfastly in view. Prussia fought the wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870 in order to consolidate the German states under her leadership. Bismarck constructed the Triple Alliance in order to extend German power over Central Europe. Mittel-Europa was not an invention of the latter-day Pan-Germans. It was a natural outgrowth of German opportunities and ambitions.

In 1914 Germany thought the time had come for further territorial expansion. The line of least resistance was to the south and east. All the materials of Empire lay there. As the dominant partner in the Triple Alliance, Germany had reduced Austria-Hungary from the status of an equal to that of a dependent. Neither the Austrians nor the Hungarians loved the Germans. But they both needed German backing in order to maintain their grip on the subject

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racess of the Dual Monarchy. Eastern and South-eastern Europe was the home of many small, long-submerged peoples. It could make little difference to them whether they remained under Austrian, Hungarian or Russian rule, or were absorbed into an enlarged German Empire. On the other hand, the populations of the more advanced Western European states, whose territory Germany coveted, would be extremely difficult to assimilate, as German experience with Alsace-Lorraine had glaringly demonstrated.

Germany's immediate future lay in the east of Europe, not in the west or overseas. When she turned her armies east in January, 1915, and began the construction of a vast central, Teutonized state, stretching well into Russia and south-east across the Bosphorus toward the Gulf of Persia, she obeyed a sound political and military instinct. There is little to show, however, that her leaders were clearly conscious of the larger purposes of the Eastern campaign. With the General Staff, now reorganized under Falkenhayn, it seemed to be rather a question of going to the rescue of Austria-Hungary, recovering Galicia, seizing Poland, and securing East Prussia from Russian invasion, before turning back for a military decision in the West. Falkenhayn was a convinced Westerner and remained one until he followed Moltke into disgrace.

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He could see, however, the absolute necessity of driving the Russian armies out of Western Galicia and clearing the Carpathian front. Austria and Hungary both demanded that modicum of relief. Italy had also begun to press Vienna for territorial concessions. Berlin was called in as a broker and the German Government had every reason to believe that Italy's demands were only a prelude to war. And Austria could not defend her south-eastern border if the danger of a Russian break-through in the north-east were not removed. Italy did enter the war before long—on May 23, 1915. But by the time the Italians could organize their offensive against Trent and Trieste Lemberg had fallen and the Russian armies in Galicia and Poland were already in headlong retreat.

After the fall of Przemyśl on March 22, 1915, General Brusiloff had pushed through the Dukla Pass and nearly through the Lupkow Pass in the Western Carpathians. East of Cracow the Russian lines had been drawn back to and beyond the Dunajec River. The Russian positions here ran north through the Carpathian foothills, following the valley of the Biala River to its junction with the Dunajec, near Tarnow, and thence up the Dunajec to the Vistula.

The Germans had failed all through the winter and early spring to break through the Russian defence in

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Poland. Now they decided to crush the front held by General Radko Dimitrieff's army, facing Cracow. Success here would put them in the rear of the Russians at the Dukla and Lupkow passes and thus compel a Russian retirement toward Przemyśl.

General Mackensen was entrusted with the Dunajec operation. Four months were spent in preparing the blow. They were well spent. For Mackensen was to cut away from the old offensive methods which had proved so costly and ineffective in Poland, as well as in Flanders. He was to invent a new tactics of assault, based on the enormous development of the offensive power of artillery. He was to end the stagnation of trench warfare, so far, at least, as the Eastern Front was concerned. It was his business to forge an instrument by which Russia's vast superiority in crude man power could be easily offset. He therefore set about introducing a mechanicalized form of warfare in which Russia could not hope to compete with Germany, since she lacked then, and would lack for a long time thereafter, the big guns and the munitions stocks with which Germany was to win her impressive and inexpensive victories.

The battle of the Dunajec stands out in the history of the war not only because it started the long Russian retreat to the Dvina River and the Pripet Marshes,

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but also because it struck a new balance in values between the offensive and the defensive. Rigid trench warfare had paralyzed the offence. It had made simply murderous the old-fashioned mass attack, following old-fashioned artillery preparation. The British offensive at Neuve Chapelle in March, 1915, indicated what massed and intensified artillery fire—"drum fire"—could do to an enemy holding an ordinary trench line. But the infantry follow-up at Neuve Chapelle had been a complete failure.

Mackensen proved in Galicia, too, that a sufficient artillery concentration could completely destroy surface trenches. He also proved that picked infantry could drive through all the trench lines of an enemy shaken by a tremendous bombardment. The Mackensen "phalanx," the forerunner of the Falkenhayn and Hutier "shock troop" formations, became as famous as Mackensen's mobile heavy batteries, doing field artillery service.

The British at Neuve Chapelle attacked a one-mile front, using three hundred big guns. Mackensen massed about two thousand guns on a front of several miles. The German official reports fix the length of the line broken through on May 2d at eleven miles. But the fire was largely concentrated on the enemy's centre before Gorlice. The bombardment lasted four

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hours and when the support troops moved forward there were no Russian trenches left. Dimitrieff's army melted away. The Biala River line, in front of Gorlice, was completely uncovered. Nor was Dimitrieff able to make a stand at the next river, the Wisloka, or at the Wistok, still farther back.

Brusiloff's rear was now exposed. By a rapid retreat he extricated himself, losing only one division. His army and Dimitrieff's eventually rallied on the line of the lower San. But the Russians couldn't hold on that line. They lost Jaroslav and Przemyśl and retreated again in confusion to positions covering Lemberg.

The battle of the Dunajec and the operations directly following it lost the Russians well over one hundred thousand prisoners. Yet conditions which applied only on the Eastern Front had made Mackensen's new offensive method seem more destructive and irresistible than it really was. It caught the Russian armies at a moment when their fighting strength was fast ebbing away. German power in artillery was magnified by extraordinary Russian weakness in that all-important arm.

The Russian armies began the war relatively better armed and better supplied with munitions than they had been in any previous war. The army reforms after the Japanese campaigns had borne fruit. But no



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European General Staff had clearly foreseen the requirements of a war of nations. And when it came to making up unexpected deficiencies Russia was at an enormous disadvantage because of her isolated position and her backwardness industrially.

In the early months of 1914 there were plenty of rifles and machine guns. The Russian field artillery was excellent in quality and lavishly served. Competent Austrian military writers like Roda-Roda noted that the Russian field artillery at that time was superior to the Austrian and expressed great surprise at so unwelcome a discovery.

But Russia had not anticipated the enormous waste of eight months of almost continuous fighting. By the spring of 1915 infantry reinforcements were arriving at the front unarmed. Rifles had already been taken away from the supply and transport organizations. Now they had to be taken away from the reserves in the training areas. Before this period no rifles had been salvaged on the battlefields. By the end of 1915 the effects of the crisis in small arms deliveries were shown in the fact that the Russian troops in the firing line were using four kinds of rifles—Russian, Austrian, Japanese, and Mexican. Troops in the rear were using French, English, and Italian types and old Berdan rifles, with lead bullets.

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At the beginning of the war each infantry regiment had eight machine guns. This allotment was increased in the case of some regiments. But with the multiplication of regiments the higher ratio was difficult to maintain and the supply of machine gun ammunition was often short. Notwithstanding these handicaps the Russian infantry generally made a good showing against German and Austro-Hungarian infantry. But the infantry lacked proper artillery support. The field artillery had shot away most of its stock of ammunition by January, 1915.

General Basil Gourko, at one time chief of the Russian Imperial Staff and at another time commander-in-chief of the western armies, says in his book, *War and Revolution in Russia*:

For months [in 1915] batteries in action daily did not receive more than four shells per gun per day. Empty parks were then brought up and there were cases where a battery used its last reserve stocks. An army corps would receive no more than one thousand shells at one delivery and would not know the date when another delivery would be made. By this time the army commanders understood that the shortage of munitions was not a creation of overcaution, but a sad reality.

Under-equipment in field artillery was of little consequence, so long as there were not enough shells to

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serve existing batteries. The real plight of the Russian armies is presented illuminatingly in General Gourko's remark that there were some compensations in the dearth of ammunition. For he says that if shells had been supplied as lavishly in the winter of 1914-15 as they were in the first months of the war, there would have been in the spring of 1915 hardly a field gun left fit to be fired. The Russians would have been just as unable to replace the worn-out pieces as they were to add to them before they were worn out.

With the heavy artillery (which could hardly be classified as heavy, when compared with Mackensen's monster howitzers) the situation was even worse. On this point Gourko testifies:

But if the Russian artillery had a shortage in field gun shells the lack of shells for the heavier guns was even more pronounced. In 1915 cases were known where heavy batteries were sent to the rear ostensibly for repair, but actually because of lack of ammunition for them. This position gradually got better, but nevertheless *it was only in the spring of 1917* that the different armies were made happy by being able to reckon on having several tens of thousands of shells for the six-inch guns and about one hundred thousand 4.8-inch trench mortar bombs; and this in comparison with the hundreds of shells which were supplied in 1914, and even in 1915, might be considered satisfactory.

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But in the spring of 1917 Russia was virtually out of the war.

At the battle of the Dunajec Mackensen's heavy artillery is estimated to have used seven hundred thousand shells. And by November, 1914, the Germans were employing twelve-inch guns in field operations, while the Russians had nothing heavier than six-inch guns until the spring of 1916.

The Dunajec therefore brutally uncovered Russia's military weakness—a weakness which could not possibly be overcome except through an effective linking up of the Eastern and Western Allied Fronts. It was evident after Dimitrieff's defeat at Gorlice and Brusiloff's retreat to Lemberg that the Germans had an attack which the Russians were powerless to stop. Falkenhayn could repeat the Dunajec operation at will and force a Russian retirement eastward which would end only when the victors were halted either by political considerations or by the physical difficulties of pursuit.

After Przemyśl was retaken by the Germans and the San was forced the Russians made a temporary stand on the Grodek line, covering Lemberg. Mackensen didn't try to break this line. He turned it on the northern end by battering his way to Rawa Russka, where Russky had broken Auffenberg's defence of

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Lemberg in September, 1914. The Galician capital fell on June 22d. Its loss and the loss of Rawa Russka exposed the Russian armies in the Warsaw salient to a flank attack coming from the south.

This salient was beyond the true Russian military frontier and had been held since August, 1914, only because the Russian armies had covered it on its weak southern face by overrunning Galicia. Now three groups of German-Austro-Hungarian armies were closing in on the enveloped Polish angle, of which Warsaw was the apex. The most dangerous attack was that from the south, in the direction of Lublin. Lublin fell on July 30th. A few days earlier Hindenburg broke through the Narew River line, on the northern face, and Prince Leopold of Bavaria got across the Vistula north of Ivangorod. Warsaw was evacuated on August 4th. By August 15th all the Russian armies were out of Poland.

The Grand Duke Nicholas planned to hold the Russian line of mobilization along the Bug River through Brest-Litovsk to Grodno and Kovno and thence north to Riga. But the momentum of the German attack could not be checked. Kovno surrendered under circumstances which suggested collusion with the enemy. The Brest-Litovsk line was punctured, and a new retreat became inevitable. Nicholas was re-

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lieved of command on September 5th, and the Russian armies drifted back under the Czar's orders until they stood about October 1st on the Dvina River, east of Vilna, east of the Pripet Marshes, and, in the south, between the fortresses of Rovno and Dubno. In the great retreat Russia had lost from 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 men.

The German pursuit now slowed down. It didn't stop because of military exhaustion. The German hold-up was more or less deliberate. Germany was about to turn south, where the stage had been set for a spectacular fall campaign in the Balkans. She had dealt Russia a crushing blow, from which there would be no genuine or lasting recovery. She had demonstrated her vast superiority in the field in which victory would bring her the most practical results. She was satisfied for the present to digest her Eastern conquests.

If the German military leaders had deliberately planned to subordinate all other war aims to the creation of a Teuton Mittel-Europa, the Russian campaign of 1915 would remain a monument to their perspicacity. It would have blotted out the memory of German failures on the Western Front. It would have proved that the Great General Staff had realized Germany's military limitations and had resolutely contracted the

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scope of the war, confining its purpose to bulwarking Germany's position in Central Europe and completing in 1914-18 the work of 1864, 1866, and 1870-71. But subsequent events disclosed that the German High Command regarded the operations in the East simply as an interlude between Western offensives.

The Russian campaign of 1915 was not altogether imposing as a military achievement. It did not compare in brilliance to Foch's 1918 offensive in France and Belgium, to Franchet d'Esperey's in the Balkans, or to Allenby's in Palestine. Given the enormous technical superiority of the German armies, they should have accomplished more. Falkenhayn and Hindenburg were also pupils of Count Schlieffen. They had the Cannæ formula always in mind. But they didn't work it out any more successfully than Moltke the Younger had worked it out in France.

The Russian armies in the Warsaw salient were ripe for envelopment. At several stages in the course of the great retreat they were in extreme peril. Mackensen might have blocked the road east from Warsaw, if he had reached Lublin a little sooner. Again at Vilna where the Russians, under the Czar's urgings, made too obstinate a stand, Hindenburg had them surrounded on two sides, with his cavalry in their rear. But the Russian tradition of steadfastness and cool-

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ness in retreat again vindicated itself. The cavalry divisions behind Vilna could not close the trap. The Russian infantry slipped out with moderate losses.

This failure to make the Cannæ theory work puzzled the German critics. One of the frankest and most competent of them, the military writer of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, admitted that the same phenomenon occurred in all the great German enveloping operations: at the Marne, in Poland, in Serbia, in Rumania, and at Caporetto. The mouth of the sack in which the enemy was caught never was closed. Nor could this writer find any convincing explanation of German failure to realize the Cannæ conception. He could only advance the excuses of inadequate transport and congestion of communications.

This exculpation has received the stamp of high German official authority. For Lieutenant-General Baron Freytag-Loringhoven engagingly puts forth something very like it when he says in his *Deductions from the World War*:

It was proved on the Marne that the age of armies numbering millions, with their improved armament and the widely extended fronts which they necessitate, engenders very special conditions. On the Vistula and in Galicia in October, 1914, at Lodz and after the winter battle at the Masurian Lakes, as well as in the autumn of 1915 at Vilna, the same phenomena



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always made their appearance, even though the conditions of extent and character of the ground, as well as the main course of events, were in each case completely different. Forces which suffice to achieve victory and even to destroy strong sections of the enemy's forces prove inadequate for the attainment of the complete success which is desired.

But this was not the case with the Allies in Palestine or in Macedonia in 1918, or with Foch's final offensive. In the first two "complete success" was attained. In the last it was on the point of attainment when Ludendorff asked for an armistice.

General Hoffmann, one of the ablest of Hindenburg's lieutenants, has attributed the comparative failure of the Eastern campaign of 1915 to Falkenhayn's poor judgment in not directing his main attack against Kovno, instead of Warsaw. Kovno was the key to the Russian northern front. Had it fallen first, Hoffmann holds, the Russian armies exposed in the Warsaw salient and in Western Galicia would have been enveloped and a peace of surrender would have been forced on Russia by the end of 1915.

But here again the factor of German sluggishness enters. Could that sluggishness have been overcome any more successfully by an offensive in the north than by an offensive in the south? German progress was impeded by an over-dependence on heavy artillery

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and special "shock troop" formations. Armies which use 12-inch guns in the field must be slow on their feet. And this fault of slowness was not overcome by the German commanders even as late as 1918, when the warfare of positions had ended and semi-open warfare had returned.

Germany didn't achieve on the Russian front a Sedan or a Sadowa. She didn't gather the full fruits of her military superiority. But her territorial gains enabled her to set up on that front the frame work of a Teuton Middle Europe.

On the Baltic coast the Prussian frontiers had been extended to the Gulf of Riga. Within the German lines, south from the Gulf of Riga to the border of Galicia, were included the province of Courland, the governments of Kovno, Grodno, and Vilna, all of Poland, and a part of Volhynia. The area of the territory overrun exceeded one hundred thousand square miles. Its population was in excess of twenty millions. In a five months' campaign Germany had expanded her own area nearly a half and added nearly a third to her population.

The assimilation of these districts would not have presented any great difficulties to a conqueror with any moral fitness for world empire. Even Germany, harsh and antipathetic as her methods were with subject

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peoples, might have reconciled the Courlanders, Letts, Lithuanians, Poles, and White Russians to a Prussian "goose step" regimen; for they had been accustomed to nothing materially better. Courland's aristocracy and merchant class were to a large extent German in blood and sympathy. The Letts and Lithuanians, eager for racial and cultural recognition and disgusted with Russian repression, were likely to welcome even a shadowy autonomy under a German sovereign.

The Poles had no illusions about the blessings of Prussian rule. They hated the Prussians even more than they hated the Russians. They still dreamed of a revival of the glories of the ancient Polish kingdom. But if real political independence was out of the question for them, they would probably have given a passive assent to the creation of a Polish dependency, including Galicia, under a Hapsburg archduke. While Berlin wrangled with Vienna over this reasonable solution the Poles were quiescent. The country remained tranquil under a three-year German occupation, although still hopeful of deliverance.

After October 1, 1915, Germany's only preoccupation on the Russian front was to organize her new possessions in a political and military way. Opportunity now called her armies to the south, where Mittel-Europa

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was to be rounded out and an Asian attachment added to it.

On this front, too, Austria-Hungary needed to be safeguarded. She had failed disastrously in two efforts to conquer Serbia. With Italy attacking her on the Isonzo, her flank on the Danube had to be protected from a possible Allied offensive out of the Balkans.

In the spring of 1915 Germany was forced to look on helplessly while the Allied fleets tried to rush the Dardanelles. The Turks were left to work out their own salvation on the Gallipoli peninsula.

But in the Balkans that year all the breaks of the game were with Germany. The Allied attempt to reach Constantinople ended in humiliation and disaster. Bungling diplomacy completed the wreck of Allied hopes. Greece was lost to the Entente by Constantine's betrayal of his people. The crafty Ferdinand of Bulgaria duped the Allied governments and secretly came to terms with Berlin. Serbia was left deserted and isolated. Rumania, not ready to fight, had relapsed into strict neutrality. The stage had set itself for a Teuton offensive in the Balkans which would clear the peninsula and link up an accomplished Teuton Middle Europe with an inchoate Teuton Middle Asia.

Mackensen, with his 12-inch field guns and his

*élite* "phalanx" troops, arrived on the Danube about the middle of September. Bulgaria mobilized on September 23d, although still protesting neutrality. The Serbs wanted to attack Bulgaria at once, but were withheld by Delcassé and Sir Edward Grey. On October 2d Ferdinand threw off the mask and announced his adhesion to the Teuton alliance.

Serbia's situation was tragic. She had now to face a German-Austro-Hungarian attack from the north and a Bulgarian attack from the east. Her armies were second to none in fighting quality. But they were much too weak in numbers to stop the invaders. Nor was there any hope of Allied aid reaching them in time. Greece had a treaty with Serbia binding her to go to the latter's assistance against Bulgaria. Venizelos tried to live up to it. He mobilized the Greek army and invited the Allies to send troops to Salonica. But Constantine repudiated the treaty, forced Venizelos out of office, and then protested against an Allied use of Salonica as a base for relief operations. The French and British did get about 125,000 troops into Grecian Macedonia. But they advanced up the Vardar Valley too slowly to prevent the Bulgarians breaking through from the east and cutting the single railroad connecting Salonica with Middle and Northern Serbia.

While the Bulgarians interposed between the Serbians

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in the north and Sarraïl's forces, which were seeking to extricate them, Mackensen conducted a leisurely advance south from Belgrade. His objective was Nish, where the Vienna-Constantinople trunk line branches off to Sofia. Using his heavy guns and sparing his infantry, he gradually pushed the main Serbian army to the south-west, compelling it to retreat through the Albanian mountains to the Adriatic. In less than two months Serbia was a memory. The government was in exile. The troops who survived the ordeal of the Albanian retreat were taken to Corfu to recuperate and many months later were transferred to the Salonica front.

The British and French forces which had pushed up the Vardar Valley found themselves in peril and retreated into Greece, where Sarraïl spent the winter constructing the entrenched camp north of Salonica. Here an Allied army of from 200,000 to 500,000 was tied up for nearly three years, clinging to the only foothold left to the Allies in the Balkan Peninsula. All the rest of it save Rumania (now as much cut off as Russia) and Greece (whose court and government were pro-German) had been incorporated in the Teuton Empire, stretching uninterruptedly from the Baltic to the lower reaches of the Tigris.

Such was the astounding German achievement of

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1915. By alliance and conquest the essentials of the Pan-German dream had been realized. Germany's European position had been secured. And the way was also paved to the establishment of a German Asian empire rivalling Russia's or Great Britain's.

Speaking broadly, the ends of a moderate and rational German military policy had now been attained. The Teuton state called into being at the end of 1915 was one which needed no sea power and no overseas colonies. It could not be strangled by hostile sea power. It took intelligent account of the advantages and the limitations of Germany's geographical position. It could be maintained by land power alone. And German land power was ample to maintain it. It could also be defended and enlarged at slight cost, because of Germany's vast superiority in military organization over Russia, her sole competitor for mastery in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Germany was the victor on the face of the war map. All she needed to do was to hold fast to what she had won.

But the original confusions of German military policy persisted. The illusions of grandeur, of world power, of naval supremacy, of overseas colonies, which the Germany of William II cherished, obscured the vision of both statesmen and soldiers. Hindenburg came closest to grasping the realities of the military situa-

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tion. But he was not yet in power in January, 1916, and by the time he came into power Ludendorff had assumed the right to speak for him.

Falkenhayn, still chief-of-staff, took the superficial view that having cleared and stabilized the Eastern Front he could afford to resume the offensive in the West. He was confident of repeating at the expense of France the easy Russian and Balkan triumphs of 1915. Hence the futile and wasteful experiment at Verdun, where Germany incurred ten times the losses which the capture of Riga would have involved and probably two or three times the losses which would have been incurred in breaking the entire Russian northern front and capturing Petrograd. And had the Germans entered Petrograd in 1916, Russia might have been put out of the war a year earlier, either by surrender or revolution, and the military situation of the Entente would have become desperate. Destiny had other plans, however, which were to be fulfilled through the arrogance and wrong-headedness of German leadership.



## CHAPTER XII

### JOFFRE'S "NIBBLING"—THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIONAL WARFARE

FROM January, 1915, to the end of February, 1916, Germany renounced the offensive on the Western Front. She was content to hold fast there while her armies in the east were crushing Russia and Serbia and hewing out the boundaries of the new Teuton Central European and West Asian state.

There were only two departures (both nominal) from the German policy of defence. In January, Kluck attacked and roughly handled a couple of French divisions which had crossed the Aisne River north of Soissons and whose communications had been imperilled by a flood. In April came the second German drive for Ypres. This succeeded far beyond German expectations. It was intended only as a demonstration, and when, through the use, for the first time, of chlorine gas waves, a French colonial division north-east of Ypres was stampeded, leaving a big gap in the Allied line, the Germans had no reserves at hand to exploit

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the victory. Here the obstinate valour of the Canadian troops, whose left flank was uncovered by the flight of the Colonials, prevented a disaster and saved Ypres. But the Allies had to yield practically all of the ridges east of the city, to retake which in 1917 cost the British army a long and bloody summer campaign.

These two interruptions apart, the offensive in the West remained for fourteen months in the hands of the Allies. The Allied staffs had every opportunity to try out the German defence and to develop an adequate counter-blow to Germany's attack on Russia. But no such counter-blow was developed. Entente strategy remained through all this period tentative, unformed, and rudimentary. It embodied no more formidable conception than that plan of scattering, experimental attacks which received the somewhat derisory name of "nibbling." To paraphrase the familiar saying that Nero fiddled while Rome burned, while Russian military power was being shattered in Galicia and Poland, the French and British on the West Front "nibbled."

This policy was in part compulsory, dictated by the cramped position in which the French found themselves after the Marne and Flanders campaigns. Joffre's enforced "nibbling" in 1915 was the direct outcome

of the mistakes in strategy in 1914, which had left so large an area in Northern France in the possession of the Germans. The natural preoccupation of the French was to defend their own soil and to recover their lost departments.

But the psychological effect of this preoccupation was to narrow the strategical outlook of the French High Command and to make it distrustful of any ventures whatever, which might reduce Allied strength in the West. It undoubtedly felt a sense of relief when the Germans carried their offensive to the East. But it didn't grasp at once the real meaning of the German eastern attack or realize that the true counter-irritant to it was not a succession of local offensives on the West Front, but an attack on Constantinople. The critical theatre of war for the Allies in 1915 was Gallipoli and the Balkans. France awoke to that situation too late—even later than Great Britain did. In September, when the chance to take Constantinople had passed and Serbia was beyond rescue, the French sent to Salonica more than enough divisions to have seized Bulair, the neck of the Gallipoli peninsula, and cut off the Turkish armies defending the forts at the Dardanelles Narrows.

The French, moreover, were not in a state of mind early in 1915 to credit Germany with a complete

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cessation of offensive operations on the Western Front. They believed that the Germans would turn back from the East sooner or later—that their real objective was Paris, not Moscow or Petrograd. And that assumption was verified a year later at Verdun.

For a year to come, possibly for two years, the French knew that they would have to bear the brunt of any German attacks on the West. Great Britain was slowly getting ready to make war. Kitchener's Three Million Volunteers were just beginning to assemble. They could not be expected to appear in the fighting line until 1916. Kitchener had himself intimated that Great Britain's strength would not be fully developed until 1917. To the French mind the military problem therefore presented itself as a fight for time—a cautious bridging over of the interval in which the British forces were being equipped and trained.

But there was a fallacy in this view—the same fallacy which underlay the theory that the Allies could win the war through mere attrition. The Entente Powers, after Italy joined them, had a more than two-to-one superiority in crude man-power. They could wear the Teuton Powers down, if attrition worked steadily and blindly. But it couldn't work that way. Time fought for the Entente so far as the utilization of British man-power was concerned. But

it fought against the Entente so far as the utilization of Russia's vastly greater man-power was concerned.

The great stake in the 1915 campaigns was Russia. And a strict defence on the Western Front, with occasional "nibbling" offensives, which produced almost negligible results on small sectors of that front, could do nothing to save Russia to the Entente. Once Germany, at a very moderate cost, had eliminated Russia, with her population of 170,000,000, the Allied preponderance in crude man-power would disappear. Attrition would become a sword cutting both ways. A wary fight for time would avail nothing; for, thereafter, the Entente would be fighting against time, and not Germany.

In 1915, after Italy entered the war, the Allies had probably a relatively greater superiority over the Germans on the West Front than at any other period up to the time when the American reinforcement became available. But a confused perception of the aims of German strategy and the lack of unified command prevented any advantageous use of that superiority. Italy had more troops than could be employed at once on the Trieste-Trentino front. And, as events were to prove, the Italian attempt to break through the Austrian mountain barrier was always a hopeless undertaking. France and Great Britain lost together about

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two hundred thousand men in the "nibbling" operations of 1915 in Flanders, Artois, and Champagne. And these troops, with Italy's overplus, if dispatched to Gallipoli, would probably have been able to cut a way to Constantinople, thus rescuing Russia and Serbia.

When, in the fall of 1863, Lee, having the benefit of interior lines, transferred Longstreet's corps to Bragg at Chickamauga, Meade countered by sending two corps to reinforce the Army of the Cumberland. In a similar exigency no troops were withdrawn from the Allied Western Front to support the Gallipoli expedition. Seven divisions or more were sent to the Ægean from England and the Allied strategists of the Western school never ceased to complain that they were not used instead of France in operations like that at Neuve Chapelle and Loos, which could produce only local and negligible results at a pathetically disproportionate cost.

The 1915 "nibbles" on the West Front strikingly disclosed the poverty of Entente strategy. But they were possibly an unavoidable phase in the education of armies suddenly called upon to face the problems of grand scale trench warfare. War had taken a new turn, which the General Staffs had not foreseen. Its difficulties had to be understood before they could be mastered. The Germans solved them in the East

with astonishing ease, because German technical and mechanical superiority on that front was overwhelming. In the West, where that superiority was less marked in the beginning and steadily dwindled, neither side solved them until near the close of the war.

Neuve Chapelle was the first Allied effort to break through an enemy trench system. This village lies about five miles north-west of La Bassée, in French Flanders, and about twelve miles west of Lille. The purpose of the attack was to open the road to Lille, which was the chief German base in this region.

The British introduced here the principle of massed artillery fire, sufficient in intensity to destroy the shallow trenches of that day, and raze all the barbed-wire entanglements in front of them. The bombardment on the morning of March 10, 1915, was completely successful on a narrow front opposite Neuve Chapelle. But farther north the obstructions were not destroyed. The British troops in that section of the battlefield were held up, and thrown into confusion. Only a small wedge had been driven into the German line. There was a delay of four hours and a half in the attempt to widen it out. On the northern face, toward Aubers, the Germans had ample time to rally and the original opening was soon closed up.

By the evening of March 10th the operation had

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definitely failed, although fighting continued through March 11th. The British casualties were 12,811—about one fourth of the forces engaged. Nothing had been gained except the knowledge that heavy artillery could blast away the front lines of a trench system, but that extreme precision in the follow-up infantry movement was needed to carry the attack through.

In May the French began an offensive south-west of Lens, with that important coal-mining and railroad centre as its objective. The British had a small part in this, attacking east of Festubert and losing eight thousand men in a few hours because of deficient artillery preparation. The French operation was in the hands of Foch. That was ample guarantee that everything was done which could have been done to insure a fair test of the value of the “nibbling” process. The fighting lasted from May 8th until early in June and goes under the general name of the Battle of Artois.

Foch made considerable progress at first. He captured the famous Labyrinth, a German trench stronghold just south of Vimy Ridge, which covered Lens from the south-west. He also cleared the Notre Dame de Lorette Ridge, to the west of Lens. But if he ever had any large strategic purpose in view—that, for instance, of breaking through the bulwarks of the German line above Arras, and compelling a consider-



able German retirement—he failed utterly in attaining it. He succeeded in penetrating the German line on a narrow front. But this dent could neither be widened out nor deepened.

The French discovered again that positions subjected to a "drum fire" bombardment became untenable. It was easy for the infantry to advance immediately after the artillery assault and capture prisoners and guns. But the existence of supporting positions on the flank and in the rear of the area of bombardment made the cost of expanding an initial gain almost prohibitive.

The French never imitated on a great scale the German example of creating special shock troops to follow up artillery attacks. In the long run this was good policy. The German method lowered the quality of the ordinary formations. It compelled a commander to depend more and more on a small percentage of his fighting force. Acting on the offensive he could, perhaps, afford to do this, holding the ordinary battalions as reserves and supports. But when the Germans were thrown on the defensive, after July 18, 1918, the dangers of the system became patent. There were not enough *élite* formations to go around and the burden of meeting the Allied offensive fell in many instances on organizations whose morale and efficiency

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had been greatly impaired by the weeding out of their shock material. It was an Allied army of even quality which defeated a German army of uneven quality in the final battles of 1918.

The failure at Neuve Chapelle uncovered the fact that the British army was poorly supplied with munitions for the heavy guns and lacked the high explosive shells needed to destroy field trenches of the more elaborate kind. The War Office had been sending shrapnel to the front. But shrapnel was now almost as useless in preparing an infantry attack against field positions as machine gun or rifle fire was. The Allies had greatly underrated the stiffness of the German intrenched defence. Mackensen might smother the relatively weak enemy lines in Galicia and Poland with his monster guns and high explosives. The Allies lacked these essentials of the new mode of warfare. And they were confronted by an enemy much more advanced in the technique of trench fighting than they were.

All through the summer the French and British worked feverishly building heavy field guns, manufacturing high explosive shells and trench bombs, multiplying their machine-gun equipment, turning out trench helmets and masks, and otherwise catching up with the requirements of the warfare of fixed positions.

In the fall they were ready to "nibble" again. Two simultaneous offensives were planned for the last week of September. The first, in Artois, under Foch and Sir John French, aimed at Lens, which was to be enveloped by the capture of Vimy Ridge, on the south, and the cutting of the Lens-La Bassée highroad, on the north. The second, in Champagne, under Pétain, had as its objective, Vouziers, the chief German railroad base in the "Dusty" Champagne region. Both these attempts were made with large armies, well supplied with artillery. If both had succeeded the German armies in the great salient with its apex at Noyon would have been put in peril and a broad German retirement would have become necessary.

The Champagne operation was the principal one. It was preceded by the heaviest "drum fire" of the war up to that date. The first German line was demolished. The French infantry cleared it with trifling losses, making large captures in guns and prisoners. But beyond the first trench line was a second, which the infantry, unsupported by "drum fire," couldn't clear. As so often happened in this early phase of rigid positional warfare, many of the units which penetrated the second line never came back. They were cut off or annihilated. Delay in bringing forward the artillery allowed enemy reserves to pour in. In

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the second stage of the operation the assailants suffered enormous losses.

The Champagne offensive lasted from September 25th until October 2d. Then it was abandoned. Pétain had advanced about a mile and a half on a front of about fifteen miles. He had taken twenty-five thousand prisoners and 150 guns. But he had hardly gotten a start toward Vouziers. He hadn't even cut the little auxiliary railroad in the German rear, which ran through Somme-Py. He lost something like 120,000 men. The German loss was probably no greater. Strategically the effect of this costly offensive was nil. It didn't shake the Germans out of the Noyon salient. It contributed little or nothing toward a solution of the problem of trench war deadlock.

In Artois the Champagne experience was duplicated. Foch, advancing north-east toward Lens, on September 25th, took Souchez and pushed toward the summit of Vimy Ridge. But he was unable to clear the ridge and in a few days was obliged to drop his offensive and go to the aid of the British, who were hard pressed to the north of Lens. The British attack had opened brilliantly. The formidable Hohenzollern redoubt, covering the Lens-La Bassée road, was taken by assault and the road itself was crossed at Hulluch. Farther south the British took Loos and Hill 70, penetrating

the last German trench line. Lens was in great danger of envelopment from the north.

But, as at Neuve Chapelle, the organization of the attack broke down. The Scottish troops who had passed beyond Loos were not supported. They suffered severely and were pushed back. By September 27th the Germans were back in their original lines north of Lens. The British losses in the Loos offensive were estimated at sixty thousand. Only three thousand prisoners and twenty-five guns were taken in the first phase of the assault. The Loos disaster caused the retirement of Sir John French as British commander-in-chief. But the failure was not essentially his. It was the natural failure of an insufficiently trained army to master the enormous technical difficulties of offensive trench warfare.

The Germans had surmounted these difficulties in their demonstration against Ypres. But they wisely refrained in 1915 from risking any serious offensives in the West. The trench defence on that front was still too strong to be broken. It was sound policy on the part of the Germans to let the Allies assume the burden of experimentation. And the Allies in 1915 still lacked the power to do anything but "nibble."

Trench warfare involved, apparently, an abandonment of all the technique of modern military science.

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It was a reversion to primitive methods of combat—to fighting at close quarters with hand grenades, bayonets, and knives, to the siege tactics of the ancients. The front trench lines ran within speaking distance of each other. The zone of fire, which had been enlarged by modern weapons to miles, was suddenly contracted again to yards. Contact between the opposing forces was continuous and fire of some sort was incessant. All the disused arts of destruction at short range were revived.

But the resemblance to aboriginal warfare was superficial and misleading. An enormous development in the rapidity of small arms fire, through the invention of the machine gun, and in the power of artillery had driven the infantry under the ground. But military science had not bankrupted itself. It had not become stagnant. It had destroyed open warfare, with all its minutiae of technique, in order to create a barren trench warfare deadlock. Now its mission was to overcome the inertia of the rigid warfare of positions by destroying the value of the trench. Artillery had brought the underground trench fortress into being. It had now to undo its work by making the underground fortress as vulnerable as it had made the fortress above ground.

The trench system—especially the deep permanent

trench system of 1915 and 1916—gave the defensive a relative advantage over the offensive such as it had seldom before possessed. But since it is in the nature of war that the offensive shall eventually outstrip the defensive, that superiority could not last. The tussle between the resisting power of the massive dugout and the destructive power of artillery continued for nearly two years. Then the dugout was converted into a trap, as land fortresses, like Liége, Namur, Antwerp, and Przemyśl, had been. When this was accomplished a return to something like the old conditions of the warfare of movement was close at hand.

Early in 1915 the trench systems were comparatively simple in construction and shallow in depth. Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Azan, of the French army, who fought in Flanders and at the Labyrinth, south-west of Lens, and came to the United States later, as a military instructor, described the earlier system in his book *The Warfare of Today*. He enumerates among the elements of a position:

1. A first line trench, which is continuous, preceded by listening posts and protected by accessory defences.

2. A doubling trench (sometimes miscalled a "cover trench") fifty to one hundred yards behind the first line trench.

3. Transversal trenches, varying in number.

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4. A support-trench, five hundred to eight hundred yards behind the first line trench.

5. A line of redoubts (sometimes miscalled "reserve trenches") not continuous, which is often used both to stop the enemy's advance and to protect important groups of artillery.

6. Boyaux, running from the rear up to the first line trench and serving for communicating between the various trenches, which are, with the possible exception of the transversal ones, roughly parallel to one another.

"Thus," Colonel Azan adds, "a subterranean city is dug out little by little, echeloned in depth, and continually improved in point of comfort and security."

There were few comforts at first—and seldom any in unfortunate regions, like Flanders, where the sub-soil is always water-soaked. But as these underground communities grew and burrowed deeper into the earth concrete and lumber were used in increasing qualities and living conditions were vastly bettered. Floors were laid in the dugouts, electric lighting was installed, and in many cases there were luxuries like bathing facilities, household furniture, and pianos.

The relatively shallow trench systems of 1915 and 1916 were strongly held. On both sides defensive tactics were the same. The idea was to prevent a breach in the line at almost any cost. Troops sufficient to counter-attack and recover a lost first trench line were



always close at hand. For that reason even the grand scale Allied offensives in Artois and Champagne produced only an immaterial territorial gain. Nor would the German second attack on Ypres have re-won the heights north-east of that city, except that the Allied defence was paralyzed for a time by the terrifying effects of the German chlorine gas.

Rigidity in defence became a fetish. It looked, for a time, as if the war would have to be fought to a finish of exhaustion on the long line from the North Sea to Switzerland on which the opposing armies had dug in.

But this ideal of rigidity gradually defeated itself. While the trench systems were becoming more elaborate and more permanent in character, the scope and power of the artillery attack were increasing by leaps and bounds. Under long-continued "drum fire" the front line garrisons were obliged to hide in the depths of the dugouts. When the infantry advance began a barrage was laid down in the rear of the defenders, cutting off their retreat and preventing supports from arriving. The capture by the French in Champagne of twenty-five thousand prisoners, trapped in the front German trench system, was the first hint of the peril of holding a shallow line too rigidly and with large masses of troops.

The initial losses of the French at Verdun and of

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the Germans on the Somme reinforced this lesson. Thereafter the Germans, who were to remain on the defensive on the West all through 1917, began to alter their positional warfare tactics. Trench systems were deepened enormously. The fixed trench line of 1915 became the fixed trench zone of 1917. The centre of resistance was shifted toward the rear. An elastic frontal system was organized, the backbone of which were the "pill boxes"—concrete outposts fitted up with machine guns and manned by small garrisons. The function of these concealed small forts was to retard an enemy advancing after the artillery preparation ceased. If they failed to stop his progress, he would soon bring up against the main defensive positions a mile or two miles back, where he would be subject to counter-attack. Under this defensive scheme heavy losses in the forezone were avoided. The main action took place, under more favourable conditions for the defender, in the middle, or battle zone.

The zone idea reached its fullest development in the construction of the famous Hindenburg Line, wrongly so-called. It was not a fortified line, but a fortified belt. It is instructive to compare the modest trench system of 1915, sketched by Lieutenant-Colonel Azan, with the vast underground fortress, guarding Douai, Cambrai, St. Quentin, and La Fère, which the

Germans spent nearly two years in building. Lieutenant-General Baron Ardenne, one of the most prominent and one of the most optimistic of German military critics, wrote of the Hindenburg barrier in September, 1918:

The British call this the Hindenburg Line, thereby betraying that they completely mistake its real character. It is not a line, but a complicated, quadratic system of tactical bases and positions, reinforced after the manner of a fortification, from Cambrai to La Fère—that is to say, over a front with a width of sixty kilometres [about thirty-eight miles] and a depth up to forty kilometres [twenty-five miles]. The enemy, therefore, has to shatter a granite block of 2400 square kilometres before he would be in a position freely to develop his forces and steer them to their higher goals, for overcoming the Siegfried position and its collateral positions could only form the introduction to further developments which would cause the ultimate aims of the Entente Powers to retire into crepuscular remoteness.

Only three weeks after this was written the Hindenburg Line had become a memory. Six weeks after it was written Ludendorff was clamouring for an armistice as the only means of avoiding a German surrender.

For formidable and impregnable as it seemed to be to those who constructed it, the Hindenburg Zone was from the beginning an acknowledgment that the offensive was gradually mastering the defensive on

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the Western Front. The turning point was reached in 1917, when one Allied offensive after another demonstrated that the German defence lines could be pierced to a considerable extent by a sufficiently concentrated attack. Cambrai, in November, 1917, showed that an attack could get clear through.

If it had been conceded that it was fruitless to try to hold a forefront line rigidly, how could a middle line be expected to hold, merely because of its defensive strength? The arrival of the tank ended the value of the elastic "pill box" front; for the tanks could drive in among the "pill boxes" and silence them. Then the midzone of defence would be converted into the forezone, and another midzone would have to be created further back, out of the field of the artillery attack. The phase of fixed positional warfare was therefore passing and yielding to the phase of rapidly shifting positional warfare. The warfare of movement was replacing the deadlock of the trenches.

Within three years and a half war had again modernized itself, escaping from an apparent reversion to immobility and stagnation. After 1915 rigid positional warfare was to continue for a time. But its paralysis was being lifted. In building the colossal Hindenburg system the Germans were to discover eventually that they had only erected a monument to the past.

## CHAPTER XIII

### VERDUN

"THE epic of Verdun." This French phrase will stick because of its felicity. The defence of the ancient fortress on the Meuse was Homeric in quality. There France met the rudest test of the war with epical devotion and fortitude.

Germany, near the peak of her military development, flushed by the extraordinary success of her Eastern campaigns, challenged France in February, 1916, to an ordeal of endurance. It was to be a sheer competition in staying power, both physical and moral. Hindenburg had said that the Russians were not equal to a contest in which victory would go to the belligerent with "the stronger nerves." His theory had justified itself in the East. The Germans now sought to experiment with it in the West.

The campaign for Verdun involved no subtleties of strategy. Falkenhayn set out to eject the French by brute force from one of the strongest positions they held between the Swiss border and Arras. And the

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strength of their positions didn't save the French. What stopped Germany was not the rampart of hills, forts, and trenches about Verdun, but an ever renewed rampart of living men.

France, still somewhat inferior to Germany in weight of artillery, but fully equal in the discipline and valour of her infantry, didn't shrink from the ordeal. At times it seemed as if the lines around Verdun would break under the stupendous German pounding. They sagged; but they were never broken. After a hand-to-hand struggle which lasted many months French doggedness triumphed.

The superb military quality of the French soldier never stood out more conspicuously than it did at Verdun. For Verdun was a battle of units, of squads, of individuals—for inches of ground, scraps of woods, footholds on hill-slopes—many times taken and retaken. Never before had enormous armies grappled so ferociously for weeks and weeks in so restricted an area.

That fact enhanced Verdun's significance. It also gave the struggle its surpassing moral value. French nerves proved equal to the fiercest strain that could be put upon them by the new German tactics of assault, based on unprecedented artillery concentration, the use of special shock formations, and the lavish employ-

ment of gas waves, flame throwers, and shells charged with asphyxiating and tear-producing gases.

No other German attack on the West Front was as sustained and vicious as that at Verdun. When it failed France breathed more freely. The indefinable prestige of German arms was shaken. Sedan and Gravelotte were forgotten. The French knew that, so far as their armies were concerned, the German onslaught could be stayed. France's future was reasonably secured, barring collapse of civilian morale, due to defeatist intrigues or war weariness.

On the German side Verdun was the completest military failure of the war. It had no value except as an experiment in attrition. And attrition, pure and simple, was a policy which Germany could not afford to pursue. The German strategic reserve which was used up on the Meuse would have sufficed many times over to deal the final blow to Russia. Hindenburg saw this clearly and from the beginning he opposed the Verdun campaign. His appointment late in the summer to succeed Falkenhayn as Chief of Staff was a tardy admission by the controlling military clique that German strength had been sapped to no purpose.

The strategical conception which underlay the Verdun operation is still obscure. In October, 1916,

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when the Germans still held positions on the right bank of the Meuse from which they could look down on Verdun, the General Staff, departing from its custom, issued a statement intended to convey the idea that the purposes which Falkenhayn had in view were in a large measure accomplished. But, as will be shown later, the purposes were neatly trimmed and localized to fit the actual situation. As the main object of this publication was to impress the German public, it would be foolish to accept its somewhat artful explanations at face value.

While the battle was in progress Allied critics were prolific in interpretations of Falkenhayn's strategy. In chapter ii of his book *The Assault on Verdun*, a Spanish writer, Señor E. Diaz-Retg, has summarized the Allied views then current. They are in brief:

1. That Germany turned west in 1916 because the chief object of the Balkan campaign had been frustrated by the creation of the Allied entrenched camp at Salonica.

2. That the Germans expected a general Allied offensive in France in the spring of 1916 and wished to "get the jump" on the Allies by anticipating it.

3. That the German General Staff thought a victory in the West was desirable in order to stimulate war loans and reconcile the German civilian population to the hardships of stricter food rationing.

4. That possession of Verdun was needed to



protect the Briey iron district, to secure Metz from an Allied attack, and to solidify the German positions in France.

5. That the General Staff believed it advisable to strengthen the Hohenzollern dynasty by staging an offensive in the West in which the Crown Prince of Prussia should be the shining figure.

These reasons are far from convincing. They don't even hang together. The last is trivial. The Crown Prince of Prussia has testified that the military clique at Grand Headquarters was intensely hostile to him. It considered him a dangerous liability. Its only concern about him was to immure him safely somewhere behind the lines where he couldn't interfere in any way with military operations. He was so immured up to the end of the war. There is nothing to show that his personal interests or wishes were ever consulted in decisions affecting military policy.

Nor was the German General Staff ever guilty of the weakness of fitting its strategy to the exigencies of domestic politics. It controlled public opinion. There was no public opinion in Germany except that which it created. The German civilian population up to the end of the war never dreamed of questioning the infallibility of judgments reached at Grand Headquarters. Public opinion might react to strategy. But strategy never reacted to public opinion.

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The existence of the Allied intrenched camp at Salonica imperilled only in a minute degree the results of the Balkan campaign. A Teuton Mittel-Europa had been established and was destined to an enormous enlargement whenever Germany should resume Eastern operations. The Salonica camp was no obstacle to the conquest of Rumania in 1916 or the dismemberment of Russia in 1918. Through 1916 and 1917 it was to serve the single purpose of frustrating a German occupation of Greece. Had the German General Staff thought it worth while to eject Sarrail's army from Macedonia, it could have done so in 1916, at a cost far below that of the futile attempt on Verdun.

If Germany needed a spectacular victory, why did she not seek one at Salonica instead of on the Western Front? To transfer her main effort to the West involved a reversal of the sound and marvellously successful policy which she had been pursuing since January, 1915. What was Falkenhayn's ruling motive in recurring to the original Moltke programme of taking Paris and crushing France?

Evidently he must have thought that the best road to Paris lay through Verdun. That was the road taken by the German armies in 1870. Any considerable progress along it would have the result of uncovering the French fortified line from Toul down to Belfort.

It would carry the German armies south of the Argonne and south of Rheims and compel a more considerable readjustment of the Allied front in France than would a break-through almost anywhere else between Nieuport and the Swiss border.

Falkenhayn, in turning west again, was simply yielding to the lure of the Moltke tradition—to the fixed idea of the Western school of German strategists. He was trying to do what the younger Moltke had partly succeeded in doing in 1914, and what Ludendorff partly succeeded in doing in 1918. But since his failure was absolute, the real scope and purposes of his strategy could not be avowed. In order to cover up his humiliation the theory was put forward that his operation at Verdun had only a limited and purely defensive character.

The official German version of Falkenhayn's strategic intentions is given in volume xxi of the *Kriegsberichte aus dem Grossen Hauptquartier*, published in 1916. It skilfully adopts and elaborates the fourth of the theories in Señor Diaz-Retg's summary. Verdun, it says, constituted the north-eastern corner pillar of the whole French defensive system. It was also the chief French sally-port for an offensive against Middle Germany. It was the most dangerous sally-port of all, since an offensive out of it would put the French

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armies in the rear of the German armies on the Aisne and Somme fronts, in Artois and in Belgium. Furthermore, French possession of Verdun was a standing threat to a German utilization of the rich coal and iron ore deposits of the Briey district, which were of immense value to the German munitions industry. In short, Verdun was, both for offensive and defensive purposes, one of the most valuable operation bases in French control.

The inference to be drawn from all this is that Falkenhayn was conducting a purely defensive operation, intended to make the German positions in France more secure against an Allied attack.

The last paragraph of the General Staff's exposition reads:

It had not been possible for us up to the spring of 1916 to close this sally-port. War on two fronts had kept a substantial portion of our forces in the Russian and Balkan theatres. Only when these forces had been released could the reduction of Verdun be undertaken with this strategic purpose in view: first to close the French sally-port, so far as Germany was concerned, and then, in the course of further operations, to swing the door inward toward France.

In this last phrase only is there any intimation that Falkenhayn expected to use Verdun as a base for an

advance on Paris. Yet, if he didn't, why did he continue for months his costly effort to destroy the French bridgehead east of the Meuse? It is highly improbable that he ever took seriously the various weighty considerations marshalled in the General Staff bulletin to justify his attack as a piece of sound defensive strategy. The General Staff itself didn't take them seriously, either then or later.

Verdun was never used as a French sally-port for an invasion of German Lorraine. Metz remained undisturbed in German possession until the armistice was signed. So did the Briey coal and iron fields. It was extremely improbable that France would ever undertake an offensive from the Meuse, so long as the German armies remained on the Aisne, the Oise, and the Somme. In Picardy the Germans were only sixty miles from Paris. In 1915, 1916, and 1917, the French were never strong enough to risk an offensive on the Lorraine or Alsace border. It was not until the very end of the war, when the American armies had taken over the Lorraine front, that Verdun was used as the base for an Allied offensive. Had the war lasted through November, 1918, there would have been an American-French offensive directed against Metz. But before that time the German armies which had held the Aisne and Somme fronts and the Hinden-

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burg Line would have been well back toward the Rhine.

In fact, German strategy in France, both before and after Falkenhayn's offensive, completely ignored the threat of Verdun. After Falkenhayn's dismissal, Hindenburg tranquilly went ahead completing the vast fortified zone which bears his name. From that zone Ludendorff launched the great offensive of 1918, regardless of the existence of the Verdun sally-port. He could probably have made a successful drive south from the Argonne or east from the St. Mihiel salient and surrounded Verdun, if he had thought it necessary to do so in order to solidify the German defensive position in France.

But Ludendorff's strategy was not defensive. Like Moltke the Younger, and Falkenhayn, he aimed at a military decision in the West. He drove salients in Picardy, in Flanders, and in Champagne, deeper than those which the Germans held in 1915. And he lost to Foch because he couldn't defend those salients—not because his armies were threatened with envelopment by an Allied offensive based on Verdun.

Falkenhayn undoubtedly expected to repeat Mackensen's exploits on the Dunajec. He employed the same means and the same tactics. But he met a foe vastly better prepared for defence than the Russians

were in 1915, and far superior in leadership and morale.

All records were broken by the German artillery concentration against the arc of the advanced French line north of Verdun and east of the Meuse. Mackensen is supposed to have used two thousand guns at the Dunajec. Falkenhayn used three thousand at Verdun—most of them of the newer and heavier calibres.

Topographical conditions greatly favoured the artillery attack. The French positions on the east bank of the river curved in a semicircle from Brabant, on the north, to the Côtes of the Meuse on the south. The northern arc was, therefore, not only subject to direct fire, but could be enfiladed along its whole length by German batteries near Forges, on the west bank, and in Spincourt Wood, to the north-east of Ornes. The German fire on February 21st was massed consecutively on the various segments on the northern eight-mile front. Its intensity may be judged from the statement of an artillery officer, reported by Señor Diaz-Retg, that eighty thousand projectiles fell in an area one thousand metres long by five hundred to six hundred wide.

As at the Dunajec and in the French attack in Champagne, the first-line defences were blasted away. Woods were razed and the hillsides were ploughed up. Most

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of the men in the trenches were either killed, wounded, or stunned.

But the defence didn't melt away. Fortunately for the French the advanced lines were lightly manned. There were only one hundred thousand French troops in the Verdun sector and they were evenly distributed over the whole front. As in the East, the German shock phalanxes advanced at the end of the bombardment, expecting to find no organized resistance. They took many prisoners. But all along the line French units offered fight. They sacrificed themselves in order to retard the German advance. It took the shock infantry four days, from February 21st to February 25th, to reach the main French line of defence on the north, from Samogneux to Forts de Douaumont and Vaux.

When the empty shell of Fort de Douaumont was taken by the Brandenburg division on February 25th, the German High Command thought that Verdun was won. But on that day the real French defence of the fortress had only begun.

There is a legend of Verdun, just as there is a legend of the Marne. It was widely published and believed in 1916 that the French High Command was ready to evacuate Verdun and withdraw all the French forces to the west bank of the Meuse. The politicians in



Paris, it was whispered, vetoed this retirement on the ground that it would have a disastrous moral effect. It has been intimated by some military writers that preparations for evacuation were actually made prior to February 25th.

But on that day General de Castelnau arrived in Verdun. He sent for General Pétain to replace General Herr, the commandant of the entrenched camp. Later General de Langle de Cary, in command of the Meuse sector, was superseded. The French General Staff took notice of the rumours that an evacuation was at one time in contemplation or under way by issuing the following statement:

At no moment of the battle of Verdun did the High Command give the order to withdraw the French troops on the right bank of the Meuse. On the contrary, on the morning of February 23d, General de Langle de Cary instructed the troops on the right bank that every point, even though enveloped, every height, even though completely surrounded, must be held at any cost and that there was but one order—to resist. On the night of the 24th the commander-in-chief issued orders to resist on the whole front between the Meuse and the Woevre, using every means available. At the same time he sent General de Castelnau to Verdun. The next morning, while en route, General de Castelnau confirmed by telephone to General Herr that, in accordance with the orders of the general-in-chief, the positions on the

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right bank of the Meuse must be held, whatever the cost. Finally, on the evening of the 25th, the general-in-chief sent to General Pétain, on his taking command, the following order:

"I gave instructions yesterday to resist on the right bank of the Meuse, north of Verdun. Any chief who should give an order to the contrary would be summoned before a court-martial!"

This communication doesn't solve all doubts as to the original intentions of Generals Herr and de Langle de Cary. But it shows clearly that from February 25th on the French army was firmly committed to that gruelling test of endurance on the heights of the Meuse to which Falkenhayn had challenged it.

The fighting around Verdun divides itself into several easily distinguishable phases. The first phase ended on February 25th. In the opening five days the Germans broke through the northern face of the semi-circular bridgehead east of the Meuse, and the French troops were drawn in on the eastern and south-eastern faces. Three hundred thousand Germans were engaged against about one hundred thousand French. Besides their losses in dead and wounded the French lost between ten and twenty thousand prisoners. But this was the ordinary cost of holding a line subject to "drum fire" bombardment. The Germans had made an advance averaging three miles on the whole eastern

front and at Fort de Douaumont they were in sight of Verdun.

Pétain's arrival was the signal for a French counter-attack. This cleared the hill on which Fort de Douaumont stood, leaving a Brandenburg battalion marooned in the dismantled work. From February 26th to February 29th there was continuous fighting in the Douaumont sector. When the German attack slackened on March 1st, the real crisis of the defence was over.

Pétain then had both the men and the guns to hold the positions on the east bank of the Meuse. He had also developed the method of counter-attack, so costly to troops which had already made great sacrifices to gain a position which in their weakened condition they couldn't hold. He was reducing the battle of Verdun to a series of infantry actions in which the better individual fighting qualities of the French infantry were bound to tell in the long run. And after March 1st, the French artillery began to measure up to the German in calibre and numbers.

The third phase of the battle was the extension of the German attack to the left bank of the Meuse. Halted at Douaumont, Falkenhayn decided to try to reach Verdun from the west. Tactically an advance on the west bank had been made unavoidable by the

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fact that the French batteries on that side could enfilade the more advanced German line on the east side of the river. The left bank operation began on March 2d, and lasted until April 11th, the centre of the attack being shifted gradually farther and farther west. The Germans gained ground persistently, but at an enormous cost. Near the river they pushed south as far as the famous two-crested Dead Man's Hill, whose northern crest they captured. But they couldn't get possession of the southern crest, or of Hill 304, to the west of it, the two keys of the defence on this part of the Verdun front.

In order to facilitate operations against Pepper Ridge, on the east bank, Falkenhayn set out to carry Goose Ridge, on the west bank. In order to envelop Goose Ridge he tried to take Dead Man's Hill. In order to envelop Dead Man's Hill he shifted the attack to Hill 304. Finally, in order to surround Hill 304, he attempted to smash the French line still farther west, between Malancourt and Avocourt. All these efforts broke down with terrific losses.

Meanwhile on the east bank the Germans made a series of desperate assaults on Fort de Vaux, about a mile south of Fort de Douaumont. These lasted, with intermissions, from March 8th until April 1st. They were a complete failure. Then, on April 18th, the

third phase of the great battle ended with the repulse of an assault on Pepper Hill. The German casualties now reached a total of about two hundred thousand.

Still Falkenhayn wouldn't admit defeat. The battle entered its fourth phase on May 7th. On the west bank of the Meuse violent German attacks all along the line culminated, on May 29th, in the capture of the southern summit of Dead Man's Hill. Then the attack shifted to the east bank. After a week of furious fighting Fort de Vaux was taken.

A breach was thus opened in the main French line of defence north-east of Verdun. Through it the Germans advanced in June against Fort de Souville, two miles south-west of Fort de Vaux. They made some progress and fighting continued in this sector through July. But the British offensive on the Somme now absorbed German attention. The assault on Verdun flagged and then ended. The May and June attacks resulted in at least one hundred thousand additional German casualties, bringing the German total to three hundred thousand or over. The French losses were probably somewhat less.

Verdun was, however, still closely beleaguered. The German General Staff communication of October, 1916, in which Falkenhayn's strategy was elucidated,

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contained this complacent statement of the situation on the Meuse:

What our troops have exhibited in the way of buoyant aggressiveness, in a stiff defence of conquered territory, in the cheerful endurance of unheard-of hardships and sufferings of every sort, and in an undeniable zest for battle, stands out as the highest possible example of heroism. The victory which they thereby achieved is considerable. We can look down on the basin of Verdun, on the city, on the Meuse bridges and the railroad lines and are able to bring them all under destructive fire. Verdun's value as the corner-stone of the defence of the French frontier is thus, if not completely destroyed, at least greatly diminished. Its usefulness as a bridgehead and as an offensive sally-port is absolutely nullified.

This assurance was premature. Almost simultaneously with its publication General Nivelle, who had succeeded Pétain, started a counter-attack, which broke through the German lines for a two-mile gain on a four-mile front. Douaumont Fort and village were recaptured. A few days later Vaux Fort and village were retaken.

On December 13th Nivelle was promoted to the command of all the French armies in France. His successor at Verdun, General Mangin, started another counter-offensive on December 15th. This broke the German line on a front of six and a quarter miles and

regained all the important strategic positions on the east bank of the Meuse. In these two brilliant operations the French took about twenty thousand prisoners and suffered very slight losses.

The door for a French invasion of German Lorraine was again open. But the French were never to use it. This fact could only add to the chagrin of the German strategists who, merely in the hope of closing it (if their own explanations are to be accepted), had sacrificed more than three hundred thousand men.

Among the great struggles of the war Verdun stands out by reason of its duration and intensity. It was distinctly a soldiers' battle. It heralded in a way the recovery by the infantry arm of its once proud distinction as "the queen of battles."

Coming in the mid-period of the warfare of deadlock, it disclosed no appreciable disturbance in the equation between the offensive and the defensive. The defensive still retained the upper hand. The lightness with which the advanced French lines happened to be held on February 21st may have conveyed a hint to the observant of the coming change in the tactics of fixed positional defence. Also in the continuous resort to counter-attack the final answer to the break-through after irresistible artillery preparation may have been vaguely suggested.

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But these were only veiled intimations. The Somme, which followed Verdun, was to be fought largely on the old lines. The complete rehabilitation of the power of the offensive was still a long way off.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SOMME—HINDENBURG'S RETREAT

CONSCIOUSLY or unconsciously, the battle of the Somme was the supreme effort of the Allies on the Western Front to break away from the sterile policy of "nibbling." The Somme was not a "bite." Nor was it, except in appearance, a grandiose experiment in what the French call the "war of usury." It was a step—perhaps in the dark, but still an important step—toward strategical freedom and the resuscitation of the warfare of movement.

At the Somme the French and British obviously aimed at breaking through the German front and compelling at least a partial German retirement. It was their answer to Verdun. But, as was the case with the Germans at Verdun, since only local results seemed at the time to have been obtained, a disposition manifested itself, after the operation was over, to qualify and minimize its strategical objectives.

There is this striking difference, however, between Verdun and the Somme. The German offensive was

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absolutely barren. The local gains on which the German General Staff felicitated itself in October, 1916, were wiped out before the end of the year. The Somme offensive, on the other hand, did not bear its real fruit until 1917. It had the retarded effect of compelling Hindenburg's "strategical retirement" out of the Noyon salient.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that the underlying motive of the Somme offensive was always to dislocate the German front south of Arras and to uncover from the north the salient, curving south-south-east from below the Somme through Chaulnes and Roye to Noyon, which constituted the apex of the German position in France. In 1918, Foch broke the Montdidier salient, which was only the old Noyon salient extended westward, by attacking in the same manner and from the same direction. The Allies had failed in 1915 in two ambitious attempts on the flanks of the German position—one in the neighbourhood of Lens and Arras, the other in eastern Champagne. It was logical enough that they should make their next attack nearer the centre.

The battle of the Somme lasted from July 1st until November 18th. It was the most sanguinary struggle of the war. The losses on both sides probably exceeded 1,200,000. In comparison with this immense

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expenditure, the results achieved by the offensive seemed inconsiderable. The British never reached Bapaume. The French never reached Péronne or Chaules. The Germans didn't concede defeat. Until after the Hindenburg retreat the Allies were hardly in a position to claim a victory.

Perplexity as to the real worth of the offensive led, for a time, to very cautious valuations of it. In his concise and modest report on the Somme operations, published on December 29, 1916, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig said that their object was threefold:

1. To relieve pressure on Verdun.
2. To assist our allies in the other theatres of war by stopping any further transfer of German troops from the Western Front.
3. To wear down the strength of the forces opposed to us.

This summary waives aside the whole question of direct or immediate strategical objectives. The German General Staff claimed nothing but local objectives at Verdun. The British commander-in-chief claimed nothing but general objectives at the Somme. But in neither case are the avowed purposes of the offensive reconcilable with its tenacity and magnitude.

If the Somme is to be judged by attainment or non-

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attainment of the three objects specified by Sir Douglas Haig, it was much more of a failure than history is likely to concede it to be. In the first place, it was not necessary to conduct a four and a half months' battle in Picardy—beginning July 1st—in order to relieve German pressure on Verdun. The crisis at Verdun had passed long before July 1, 1916. There was a real crisis early in February. But none emerged later. France had shown that she intended to hold Verdun and that she was able to hold it. Joffre was not obliged to defend Verdun on the Somme. He would not have been likely to involve himself in a large and costly offensive for Péronne, if he had any idea that Verdun was in danger. No Frenchman would have thought of swapping Verdun for Péronne.

Joffre said to Señor E. Diaz-Retg, the author of *The Attack on Verdun*: "At no time did we believe that Verdun would be taken."

A British offensive at any point of the Western Front could not help having the indirect effect of absorbing German reserves. But the Russian offensive in Volhynia and Bukowina had already begun to absorb them before July 1st. The Verdun campaign was a closed incident, so far as Germany was concerned, before the battle of the Somme opened. The threat of a British attack on the Picardy front was sufficient to inhibit,

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after June 1st, the further prosecution of Falkenhayn's disastrous venture on the Meuse.

If a British offensive on the Somme was not needed to relieve German pressure on Verdun, it was, on the other hand, impotent to relieve German pressure on the Eastern Front. After the battle of the Somme began Brusiloff's progress toward Lemberg was halted. Before the Somme ended Rumania had been crushed. With their severed fronts, the Western and Eastern Entente Powers were never able to give one another any real assistance. Allied offensives in France, in 1915, couldn't save Russia or Serbia. They couldn't stave off Allied failure in Gallipoli. Similarly, in 1916, they were powerless to sustain Russia or to save Rumania.

The only Allied army which could intervene effectively in Rumania's behalf was Sarrail's, holding the intrenched camp of Salonica. But this force was too weak to do more than make a feeble demonstration against Bulgaria, which was to end with a trivial advance as far as Monastir. In so far as the Somme was intended to demonstrate the efficacy of joint Allied action on two isolated fronts against an enemy holding interior lines, it was a fiasco. It could not well be anything else; for the theory it was demonstrating was an illusion.

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On the assumption that the French and British fought the Somme in order to check Germany's triumphal progress in the East, the Germans were entitled to claim a victory. Such an opportunity was not overlooked by the German General Staff, when it issued, in November, 1916, its official summary of the Somme operations. After commenting sarcastically on the singularly restricted strategic aims announced in Paris and London it said:

The second of these modest objectives amounted to this: "Can we succeed in tying up so much of the enemy's available forces that Germany will be at least unable to put sufficient forces at the disposition of her south-eastern allies, either to protect them against the new Balkan belligerent (Rumania) or to help them conquer her?" . . .

To this question our answer is: "We have held our Western Front and nevertheless been able to release enough men not only to bring the Russian offensive to a standstill, but also to snatch from the jaws of the new enemy his stolen plunder and to assist the Bulgarians in recovering the lands in the Danube Delta of which they were robbed. Already the Balkan passes, the gates to the heart of Rumania, are in our hands." . . . To the Entente's claim of strategical success we enter this denial: "A liberated Transylvania, a conquered Dobrudja."

Had the German bulletin writer waited a month longer he might have added: "An occupied Bucharest."

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The Somme saw attrition on a stupendous scale. The new British armies had their first test. And the test was prodigal. The North cried out in horror in 1864 at the butchery of Cold Harbour. The Somme was one Cold Harbour after another. The British loss from July to December was approximately 450,000. The French loss may have been 250,000. The Germans probably lost between 500,000 and 600,000 men, of whom more than 65,000 were taken prisoners.

But on this showing, the Allied policy of wearing down the enemy—if it was a deliberate, primary policy—hardly justified itself. The attrition theory was one of the survivals from the earlier days of the war, when Entente paper man-power, based on population, exceeded Teuton man-power more than two to one. But the Russian collapse had shown that mere numbers were not a decisive factor in the military equation. After the subsidence of Brusiloff's offensive and the conquest of Wallachia, Russian man-power ceased to count. The seeds of the revolution had already been sown. Russian dissolution was approaching. And with Russia practically out of the war, the United States showing no signs of entering it, and Japan declining to send troops to Europe, something like equality in numbers seemed about to be restored.

Looked at from this angle, the Somme was as danger-

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ous a drain on Allied fighting strength as it was on German. It had suddenly become as important for France and Great Britain to husband their man-power as it was for Germany. To fight without a clear strategic objective, simply for the purpose of "wearing down," ceased to be sound policy. And the best results in the way of attrition—if attrition was the only aim—were still to be had by fighting on the defensive.

Some perception of this truth became noticeable in the Allied operations on the West Front after 1916. There were no more Sommes. Both the British and the French (the French especially) began to limit their offensives, wisely awaiting the time when the offensive should definitely get the upper hand of the defensive. For the Germans the effects of the Verdun lesson lasted through 1917. They adjusted their defensive to the new conditions imposed on it by the devastating effect of artillery fire on first-line trenches, strongly held, and then adhered to it, except in operations like those of the Crown Prince of Prussia's armies in the Rheims-Soissons sector, which were largely in the nature of grand scale counter-attacks.

The Somme, whatever other strategic purpose may be ascribed to it, made the first real breach in the German defensive system in Northern France. The German line ran slightly south-west from Arras down to



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Fricourt—a village a couple of miles east of Albert. There it turned east at a right angle for about eight miles. Then it ran south to the Somme River. Below the river it bulged out again, passing in front of Chaulnes and Roye and curving east near Lassigny to form the Noyon salient.

The purpose of the Anglo-French attack was to drive a deep wedge between the Arras sector and the Noyon sector. The British were to advance north across the southern face of the right angle, whose apex was at Fricourt, meanwhile containing the Germans on the western face. Bapaume, nine miles away, was the ultimate British objective. The immediate objective was an east and west ridge running, roughly, from the Tortille River to the Ancre.

The French were to support the British left and were also to move east on a long front toward Péronne, five and three quarters miles away (situated in the angle where the course of the Somme changes from north to west), and toward the general line of the Somme south of that city. A deep salient was thus to be driven with its tip to the north-east of Combles.

The French made more rapid progress than the British. In the fortnight between July 1st and July 15th, they advanced their line south of the Somme to a maximum depth of six miles on a ten-and-a-half-

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mile front. They reached the western bank of the river opposite Péronne. They took 12,250 prisoners. The British in the same period advanced their line to a maximum depth of three miles on a ten-mile front and took 10,000 prisoners.

The French drive was halted after July 15th by fierce German counter-attacks. South of the Somme fighting died down, although early in September and also in October General Joffre made a considerable effort to capture Chaulnes, the key to the German positions south of Péronne. The French turned their attention instead to helping out the British on the northern part of the battle front, co-operating in the extension of the Allied salient east and north-east of Combles.

The British reached the southern crests of the cross-ridge from the Tortille to the Ancre by July 15th. The rest of July was spent in consolidating these positions behind the original German first line and beating off counter-attacks. There was an interlude in August. The heavy guns had to be brought forward for a new blasting operation. This began on September 2nd and lasted through the month.

The British attacked with tremendous energy, and the chief centres of German resistance on the cross-ridge fell one after the other. Guillemont and Ginchy were taken on September 3d, Martinpuich and Cour-

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celette on September 15th, Les Bœufs and Morval on September 25th. Thiepval, on the western end, and Combles, on the eastern, still held out. But the French had already penetrated east of Combles and now enveloped that town from the south and west. It was evacuated on September 26th. On the same day Thiepval was stormed by the British, who also pushed forward in the centre to Gueudecourt, a mile north of the ridge.

The toll of these operations was ghastly. Divisions in the line had to be constantly replaced. The offensive slowly died down. October was excessively cloudy and rainy. The Allied salient was extended north-east of Combles when the French captured Sailly and Saillisel. The last-named village was lost repeatedly and didn't pass permanently into Allied possession until late in November. In October the British pushed forward their front in the centre as far as Le Sars, four miles south-west of Bapaume. In November they extended their gains westward by eliminating a small German salient west of the Ancre River. The total area reconquered was approximately 120 square miles.

The crisis of the battle of the Somme was reached in the last week of September. The British and French had concentrated their attack at the point of the salient which they were driving past Combles toward

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Bapaume. By a terrific effort they cleared the ridge which was the backbone of the second German line of defence. But having cleared it they were unable to go any farther. The October intermission, which followed, marked a virtual abandonment of the Somme operation, so far as it had aimed at a large-scale penetration of the German lines in Picardy.

The German official report notes, not without justification, four different phases in the Allied attack. The first, covering July, was an ambitious attempt to break through both toward Bapaume and toward Péronne. Near the end of July this attempt confined itself more and more to a broadening out of the Allied salient north of the Somme. In August there was a lessened pressure on all parts of the front. The third phase came in September with a renewal north of the Somme of the breaking-through effort at the point of the salient, on both sides of Combles. This brought the Allies their maximum tactical success and also substantial gains in territory. It ended in temporary exhaustion and was never renewed. The fourth phase, in October and November, was distinguished by a return to broadening-out tactics. It was the beginning of the end.

By October the German situation on the Eastern Front had been entirely relieved and ample provision

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had been made for the campaign against Rumania. Turkish troops had been brought up to Galicia and Bukowina. The drain on German reserves was over. Hindenburg, who had succeeded Falkenhayn as the German Chief of Staff, was able to send heavy reinforcements to the West and these reinforcements barred the way of the Allies to Bapaume.

The German report on the Somme, published early in November, 1916, says:

The strengthening of the German defence since the critical 25th of September has made such progress that today we oppose to the enemy a strength which offsets his numerical superiority, thanks to the better fighting quality of our troops of all arms.

German troops on the Somme front in November, 1916, were far from excelling the Allied troops in quality. But there was a much nearer approach to equality in numbers then than there had been in the summer and early fall.

The Somme was, in the main, a battle of the rigid positional type. Yet it represented material progress toward open fighting and freedom of movement. The area conquered was many times larger than the area conquered in the battle of Artois or the battle of Champagne. And the real effects of the dislocation of the

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German line were to be disclosed four months later in the Hindenburg retreat.

Field Marshal Haig noted in his report that cavalry was used in High Wood on July 14th. General Sir Henry Rawlinson, commanding the British Fourth Army, evidently had a considerable body of cavalry, in reserve, for use in case of a break-through. Troops fighting on horseback were a piquant reminder of conditions which trench warfare had threatened to abolish.

At the Somme, too, tanks were used for the first time, co-operating with an infantry assault. This happened on September 15th, when early in the morning, as the Haig report says, "tanks were seen to be entering Flers, followed by large numbers of troops."

This was an historical occasion; for the tank was destined to play a commanding rôle a little later in revolutionizing offensive tactics and readjusting the balance between the offensive and the defensive.

The potentiality of the new weapon was promptly indicated, as may be judged from the following passage in the British Field Marshal's statement:

On the same day [September 26th] Gueudecourt was carried after the protecting trench to the west had been captured in a somewhat interesting fashion. In the early morning a "tank" started down the portion of the trench held by the enemy, from the north-west; firing its machine guns and followed by

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bombers. The enemy could not escape, as we held the trench at the southern end. At the same time an aeroplane flew down the length of the trench, also firing a machine gun at the enemy holding it. These then waved white handkerchiefs in token of surrender, and when this was reported by the aeroplane, the infantry accepted the surrender of the garrison. By 8.30 A.M. the whole trench had been cleared, great numbers of the enemy had been killed, and eight officers and 362 of the ranks made prisoners. Our total casualties amounted to five.

The German defence systems in the region between the Somme and the Ancre were among the most formidable on the Western Front. They were held strongly, in accordance with the defensive theories and methods of the earlier phases of trench warfare. But the British attack demonstrated that front defensive lines, however strong, could be demolished or smothered by artillery fire. German experience in the trying period from July 1st to November 1st undoubtedly led to the revision of the scheme of defence, which was to be put into effect in 1917. This scheme called for a forezone lightly held, with many small centres of resistance, the main defence being withdrawn a mile or more to the rear. It also required more dependence to be placed on counter-attacks, which were, in fact, a characteristic of the German defensive on the Somme from September on until the end of the battle. This change worked

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steadily to lighten the burden of the offensive and to increase correspondingly the burden of the defensive.

This radical transformation of German tactics was, in fact, disclosed in the supplementary battle of the Somme, in February and March, 1917. Field Marshal Haig then shifted his main attack to the Ancre Valley, approaching Bapaume from the west. Good progress was made during February. On February 25th, when the British stormed the German first system of trenches, running from north of Gueudecourt to Serre, on the west side of the Ancre, they discovered that the enemy front line was held only by machine gun squads in selected positions, the infantry and artillery having retired a considerable distance. By March 10th the British drew close in on Bapaume from the south and west. But 'Hindenburg had already decided to yield it without a fight.

The great German "strategic retirement" of 1917 was already under way early in March. But the Allies didn't become aware of the movement until March 15th. The British entered Bapaume and Chaulnes on March 17th and Péronne on March 18th. The German armies had razed clean the zone from which they were withdrawing and pursuit was difficult and ineffective. The area evacuated covered over one



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thousand square miles and before the war had contained a population of about two hundred thousand.

Hindenburg withdrew, generally speaking, out of the great Noyon salient, established in the fall of 1914, after the Battle of the Aisne. The rim of the salient ran originally from the heights north of Soissons northwest through Noyon to Roye, and thence north past Chaulnes to Albert and Arras. It was called the Noyon salient because Noyon was situated near its apex and was the point in it nearest to Paris.

But at the time of the retreat this larger salient had been broken into two smaller salients, as a result of the Allied operations on the Somme. A blunt wedge had been driven into the German positions, the tip of it due east of Albert and due north of Péronne. The northern German segment had assumed the form of an isosceles triangle, with the apex at Arras. The western side and the southern base were both under strong pressure from the British, who, if they took Bapaume, would be in a position also to envelop the triangle from the east.

The German positions, west of the Arras-Bapaume highroad, had, in fact, become valueless for armies standing on the defence.

South of the Somme the situation was a little less precarious. But if Péronne should be lost and with it

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control of the river between Péronne and Nesle, the whole Noyon front could be outflanked and rolled up.

Hindenburg therefore made a virtue of an obvious necessity. His retirement was not voluntary, except in the sense that he was wise enough to anticipate the disastrous effects of a renewal of the battle of the Somme. By withdrawing unmolested and with a great parade of strategical prevision and mechanical precision of execution, he gave his operation an appearance of self-determination. The Germans boasted of the retreat, with its barbarous devastation of the territory surrendered, as a prudent extrication. They refused to see that it involved a concession that the direct strategical object of the Allied offensive on the Somme had been attained—something which the Allied commanders had been chary about asserting and which the German General Staff had vehemently denied.

The maximum German retirement was about twenty-five miles, from Chaulnes and Roye to a line running between St. Quentin and La Fère. Above Péronne it averaged about ten miles. On the south the new system joined up with the old one along the Ailette River, near Coucy. It ran north to La Fère, on the Oise, and up the Oise Valley to Moy. Thence it turned north-west to St. Quentin, which remained nearly encircled by the French. Thence it ran in front of

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Le Catelet, passed Cambrai, four or five miles to the west, and ended at Arras. It was modified in the spring of 1917, after the battle of Arras, when the Germans fell back to the Siegfried line, running north from Quéant to the neighbourhood of Lens. Except for this recession the great barrier stood unbroken until the fall of 1918.

In the broad strategic sense Hindenburg's retirement marked the final step toward that change in German military policy which he had long had at heart. He had won his fame on the East Front. He had been the chief builder of Mittel-Europa. Now he wanted to consolidate Germany's enormous gains in Russia and the Balkans, where the cost of conquest was light, while tiring out France and Great Britain by a cautious defensive in the West. That was the true German policy, from which Verdun was a flagrant departure.

At the time Hindenburg was withdrawing to what he considered an invulnerable defence line in France the Russian revolution had arrived. As a military power Russia was to die slowly. But she was certain to die. Then Germany would have troops enough to carry the war to a draw in the West—which for her would mean victory.

The Hindenburg line was intended as a symbol of the permanency of the German occupation of Northern

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France. It was not meant to be a threat to Paris, nor a "jumping off" point for another expedition below the Marne. Ludendorff used it as such in 1918. But he was then demonstrating his own strategy, not Hindenburg's. The great barricade which the latter erected defied French and British assaults all through 1917. It would probably have defied them through 1918 and 1919, if madness at Berlin had not driven America into the war.

But even before Hindenburg had settled down in his vast system of field fortifications, his strategical scheme was wrecked by Germany's decision to summon another and more powerful enemy into the arena, to take Russia's place. His own power as Chief of Staff had passed to Ludendorff, who was willing to tie up Germany's fortunes with the insane project of unrestricted submarine warfare.

## CHAPTER XV

### RUSSIA'S COLLAPSE—RUMANIA

THE collapse of Russian military power dates from the great retreat of 1915. The defeats of that year sealed the fate of the old order. And Russian military power—such as it was—was bound up with a continuance of the old order.

Neither the government nor the people realized clearly what was happening. The revolutionary process was hidden and for that reason all the swifter and more fatal. For a time, in fact, both the government and the people reacted vigorously to the Teuton invasion. The Czar took direct command of the armies. Among the military leaders there was no thought of quitting. In their opinion, the disasters of 1915 could easily be repaired. The Western Allies and the United States would supply guns and munitions and Russian man power was practically inexhaustible.

The machinery of internal administration had broken down to a considerable extent. It was supplemented by the activities of the Zemstvos and other public bodies,

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which took charge of sick and wounded soldiers and refugees and also helped to supply the armies with food and clothing. In 1916 the war had become more nationalized and popularized than ever before. But with the unloosening of individual and community energies, the foundations of the Romanoff autocracy were sapped.

The political complications which led up to the dethronement of the Czar are still obscure. General Basil Gourko, who as acting Chief of Staff was thrown into close relations with Nicholas II from November 23, 1916, to March 7, 1917, describes him as a reasonable and conscientious commander-in-chief, loyal to the Entente and thoroughly interested in the prosecution of the war. He readily accepted military advice. But General Gourko notes that this amenability did not extend to questions of internal administration and politics.

The reason for this is plain, as Gourko indirectly admits. In the latter field Nicholas was not his own master. He was under the influence of the Czarina who, in turn, was controlled by reactionary politicians and mystic adventurers like the monk Rasputin. Stürmer and Protopopoff were the Czarina's protégés. Apparently they maintained themselves in power by playing on her morbid solicitude for her son's succession and the future of the dynasty.

In an autocracy, war is a dangerous experiment. It shows too clearly the dependence of the government on the people. It could not but have the effect in Russia of accelerating the desire of all classes for a larger measure of political freedom. Roda-Roda, the Viennese *littérateur* and war correspondent, wrote in 1914 a story of the experiences of an Austrian Ukrainian who was taken prisoner by the Russians. The Ukrainian reported an intelligent young Cossack officer as saying: "The revolution will come, whether Russia wins or loses." It was a true prophecy; for it represented an instinct deep in the mind of the Russian people.

In 1916, hopes of a revolution centred more and more in the Duma. The Duma, therefore, became the bugbear of the reactionary politicians who had the ear of the imperial family. Protopopoff calmly unfolded to Gourko, early in 1917, his plan for suppressing the Duma. But earlier than that the Czarina's advisers had evidently turned toward the idea of a peace with Germany as the best means of preserving the imperial prerogatives. Stürmer's policy was pacifistic in tendency and effect. And the Russian people had come by 1917 to distrust the Protopopoff clique not only as enemies of the liberal movement but also as friends of Germany.

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Political conditions were, therefore, shaping themselves all through 1916 for the revolution, which came in March, 1917—apparently like a bolt out of a blue sky. Military operations in 1916 were not directly affected by the political manœuvres at Petrograd, except in so far as some of the Czarina's extreme followers may have established secret communications with Berlin. The armies continued to fight. But, like the people, they had lost their sense of personal loyalty to the Romanoffs and when the revolution came they accepted it with indifference.

So far as the Russian High Command was concerned it showed no chagrin at the failure of the Western Allies to come effectively to Russia's aid. The Russians had made many sacrifices for the sake of influencing the strategic situation in the West. They had invaded East Prussia in August, 1914, in order to relieve German pressure on France. By their victories in Galicia, they had compelled Germany to turn east in 1915. But France and Great Britain had accomplished very little in return that year, when the German armies were driving the Russians out of Galicia, Poland, Lithuania, and Courland.

Russia was to play the same generous rôle in 1916. In order to prevent German reinforcements flowing west to the Verdun front Kuropatkin undertook a pre-



mature and barren winter offensive in the Dvina sector. Later, when the Austro-Hungarian drive down the Adige Valley into Northern Italy got under way, Brusiloff's offensive in Volhynia was hurried up. It had an immediate effect. For the Austrian command had to break off the Italian offensive and shift troops east, in order to check Brusiloff's sensational advance. Russia again did her part as a faithful ally of the Western Powers. But the result was that she exhausted her strength before Rumania entered the war and could not make good on her earlier promise to guarantee the Rumanian conquest of Transylvania.

Russia began the year 1916 with an offensive against Czernowitz, the capital of Bukowina. It lasted three weeks, cost sixty thousand casualties, and got nowhere. The Dvina offensive followed in March. It lasted two weeks and cost more than one hundred thousand casualties. Again the strategical results were nil. Russian man-power could not offset German superiority in artillery and in the mechanical equipment for defensive trench warfare.

To get better results Russia had to turn south and strike at "the secondary enemy," Austria-Hungary. Brusiloff's great offensive of June–August, 1916, was a repetition on a broader scale of the successful Russian offensive of August–September, 1914. The Austro-

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Hungarians were again caught napping. They were decidedly inferior in numbers, and in artillery, having transferred many divisions and heavy guns to the Trentino. With a lavish use of munitions and of men the Russians crashed through the Austro-Hungarian lines in Volhynia, Galicia, and Bukowina to a depth of from twenty to fifty miles. Once more they reached the eastern slopes of the Carpathians.

Brusiloff's drive had been prepared for by an accumulation of guns and shells, furnished largely by Great Britain, France, and Japan. The best Russian troops had been massed in the south, under the command of the most energetic field generals, including Letchitsky, Scherbatchev, Sakharov, and Kaledin. The drive was originally intended to coincide with Rumania's entry into the war, and to support her invasion of Transylvania. But as has been said, Italian necessities advanced its date. In one sense this was fortunate; for it found Austria-Hungary with her hands tied in the East.

The battle was fought on a front of 250 miles—in strange contrast with the restricted, intensive struggle which was just dying away at Verdun. It began on June 4th. The greatest initial progress was made in the sector about Rovno, the eastern extremity of the famous triangle of Volhynian fortresses—Rovno, Dubno,

Lutsk. Lutsk, at the other end of the base from Rovno, and Dubno, at the southern apex, had fallen into the hands of the enemy at the end of the Teuton drive of 1915. These three fortresses had been built to protect Kiev from an Austro-Hungarian irruption out of north-eastern Galicia.

Moving west from its base at Rovno, General Kaledin's army encountered two divisions of Czecho-Slovaks or South Slavs, which cheerfully surrendered. A gap was thus opened, through which the Russian cavalry and infantry poured. By June 6th they had entered Lutsk. On June 10th Dubno, enveloped from the north, was evacuated. By June 23d Kaledin's forces were about twenty-five miles west of Lutsk, where the advance was suspended, awaiting developments farther north and south. To the south Sakharov was held up near Tarnopol for a time. But on his left, Scherbachev captured Buczacz. Letchitsky, farther down, reached Czernowitz on June 21st.

On the northern battle front Kovel now became the chief Russian objective. It was an important railroad junction and Hindenburg was determined to hold it at any cost. On July 4th a new Russian army, under General Lesh, advanced west along the Kovel-Kiev railroad and in three days reached the Stokhod River, twenty miles east of Kovel. Here the German defence

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tightened up, and although Lesh, supported by Kaledin, delivered many assaults and actually passed the river at two places, the German line held without much difficulty. In fact, wherever German troops stood, or furnished a considerable stiffening, Brusiloff's drive made no material progress.

The Russian offensive had completely relieved Italy. Its other purpose, from the point of view of general Allied strategy, was to link up the Russian front with the Rumanian. Success on the southern front therefore counted more than success on the northern front. After the fall of Czernowitz, Letchitsky's armies overran Bukovina. Cossack cavalry reached Kimpolung, on the Rumanian border, on June 23d, and then pushed west as far as the Carpathian passes into Transylvania.

Unfortunately Rumania was not yet ready to declare war. So Letchitsky turned north into Galicia, aiming at the Jablonitsa pass into Hungary. He took Kolomea and Delatyn and seized the northern approaches to the pass. After a month's rest he renewed the offensive into Galicia. In conjunction with Scherbachev he captured Stanislau on August 10th, and this operation compelled the Bavarian army, holding the sector to the north, to draw back toward Lemberg. But by the end of August the Brusiloff offensive was over.

It had had an amazing success—at least on the surface. Seven thousand square miles of territory were recovered. About 350,000 prisoners had been taken, nearly all of them Austro-Hungarians, perhaps 50,000 of them Slavs and Transylvanian Rumanians, who had voluntarily given themselves up. More than four hundred guns were captured.

It was Russia's greatest military effort—and practically her last. The offensive was pushed fairly close to the stage of exhaustion. The munitions which had been accumulated had been shot away. The armies had suffered tremendous losses—probably equalling, if not exceeding, those of the enemy, which may have totalled six hundred thousand. And there were political reasons for halting the attack—the dynastic reasons which now shaped the policy of Stürmer, Protopopoff and the politicians who had the ear of the Czarina.

General Gourko speaks guardedly of the causes of the stoppage of the great summer offensive. He says:

Of course, in our advance we took into account the great size of our living forces and utilized them to counterbalance our shortage in material resources. The event showed that such a calculation had no sufficient foundation. However excellent the living force was, however high its warlike spirit, nevertheless there existed a limit. One cannot, under such

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conditions, utilize living strength against dead materials. Moreover, in course of time, as the operations draw out, the stock of moral force wears out, while the flow of material force, at any rate with our enemies, remains at the same level.

This is a clear acknowledgment of the fundamental handicap under which Russia laboured in a war in which she was cut off from the support of her Western Allies. Gourko continues:

In this way the advance of Brusiloff's troops nearly ceased about the end of August. The reason lay, not so much in the shortage of reserves—because these reserves were sufficient to fill a part of the new Austro-Rumanian front—as in that misfortune which followed us from the very outset of the campaign, shortage in ammunition for the artillery, and particularly for the heavy guns.

Nevertheless the weariness of the troops had its effect to a certain extent. But there can be no question that the stoppage of the advance was premature and founded on orders from Headquarters, under a pretext which could not be openly spoken about, whereas amongst our Allies, if not in the press, such reasons were publicly mentioned or whispered.

Brusiloff's offensive was an impressive experiment in attrition. It weakened Austria-Hungary. But it had no permanent beneficial effects in the way of relieving the strategical situation. The relief to Italy was incidental. And the fact that Russia had exhausted

herself by the end of August left the Allies not only powerless to reap any advantage from Rumania's long delayed entry into the war, but also condemned them to stand by helplessly and see Rumania sacrificed, as Serbia and Montenegro had been sacrificed the year before. Once more in the Balkans Allied diplomacy and strategy were to show themselves blind and halt.

Lack of Allied unity of command never produced more calamitous consequences than those which flowed from the bungling of the Gallipoli and Rumanian campaigns. Had there been an Allied generalissimo in 1916, with the vision and confidence of Marshal Foch, Russia might have been saved from dissolution, the Balkans cleared and Constantinople isolated or captured. Here were the elements in the situation. There was an Allied army, with an estimated strength of more than four hundred thousand, in the entrenched camp at Salonica. Half of Greece had broken away from Constantine's rule. There was a provisional pro-Ally Greek government at Salonica under Venizelos. The Allied fleet dominated Athens. Constantine could have been dethroned and expelled in 1916, as easily as he was in 1917. Greece would then have entered the war and Sarraïl's energies would not have been paralyzed by the constant threat of an attack from the rear.

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Rumania had an army of six hundred thousand men, at least twice the strength of the Bulgarian army. If the Russian offensive had been held up, as originally planned, until Rumania was ready to strike, and had been conducted in close co-operation with Rumania (Italy attacking at the same time on the Isonzo and the French and British on the Somme), Bulgaria could probably have been overwhelmed in September, 1916, the Central Powers separated from Turkey and a free passageway opened into Russia across Bulgarian territory, from the Ægean to the Black Sea.

Having control of the Black Sea and the Danube, Russia could easily have sent south in the fall of 1916 some of the armies, whose strength was wasted earlier, striving for purely local results on the Volhynian front. From Russia's own point-of-view her man-power could be put to far better use in the Balkans than along the Russian battle line. No objective which she could reasonably hope to reach in the North would bring her any nearer to a junction with her Western Allies, on whom her salvation in the way of adequate supplies of war material depended. But in the Balkans she would be moving steadily toward contact with the army of Sarrail.

Did the Allies ever entertain this larger conception of a union of the Russo-Rumanian and Macedonian



fronts? The German General Staff publications repeatedly credited them with such a plan. But it was never avowed by the Allies themselves and practically nothing was ever done to carry it through. The Allied diplomats concluded the agreement with Rumania. It bears the traces of their workmanship; for in it strategic aims are subordinated to political ones. The skin of the bear was divided with great precision. But no provision was made for slaying the bear.

There was an alternative strategical plan—the invasion of Transylvania—and that was chosen probably because it harmonized with Rumania's territorial aspirations. Under her agreement with the Allies she was to have Transylvania and the greater part of Banat of Temesvar—two non-Hungarian portions of the kingdom of Hungary. Her natural preoccupation was to get military possession of them at once. As soon as war was declared—on August 28, 1916,—she pushed her forces through the Moldavian and Wallachian passes into Transylvania and also sent an expedition past the Iron Gates of the Danube into the Banat.

Russia was to co-operate in the invasion of Transylvania. But to do so the Russians had first to force the strongly held passes of the Eastern Carpathians. This her armies, in their weakened condition at the end of August, were never able to do.

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After the Rumanian débâcle, brought on in large part by the collapse of the Rumanian-Russian defence in the Dobrudja, it became the fashion to criticize Rumania for having pushed recklessly across the Transylvanian border in defiance of Allied advice. Such criticism was made in ignorance of the terms of the secret treaty between Rumania and the Entente, which didn't see the light of day until after the armistice was signed.

The military annex to this treaty pledged Rumania to an offensive against Austria-Hungary. Article IX of this convention says: "The principal object of Rumanian action will be in the direction of Budapest through Transylvania." Russian assistance was provided for in this stipulation of Article II: "The Russian army will aid by vigorous action, notably in Bukowina." Russia also promised to send into the Dobrudja two divisions of infantry and one division of cavalry, to co-operate with the Rumanian army against the Bulgarians. These were sent, but they proved lamentably inadequate to stop Mackensen's unexpected whirlwind offensive.

The Allies thought that they had sufficiently guaranteed the safety of Rumania's southern border by promising an offensive out of the Salonica intrenched camp. By the terms of the treaty it was to begin on August

20th, eight days before the Rumanian declaration of war. This promise was fulfilled only to the extent of an announcement by the French War Office on August 21st to the effect that "on August 20th the Allied forces at Salonica took the offensive on the entire front."

What really happened was that the Bulgarians, evidently forewarned, themselves began an attack on the Salonica front on August 18th. They gained considerable ground. On Sarrail's extreme right they took the Greek port of Kavala, occupied by troops loyal to the Greek Government, with which Bulgaria was not at war. By collusion with Constantine these troops were sent to Germany as nominal prisoners. It was not until September 18th that the Sarrail offensive—such as it was—got started. By November 19th the Allied left wing had reached Monastir, just across the Serbian border. But less than three weeks later Mackensen was in Bucharest.

True to its old failings, Allied strategy clung to the theory of loosely co-ordinated attacks on various fronts. German strategy adhered to the principle of seeking a decision through envelopment on a single front. Pitting the first method against the second, the outcome could never be in doubt.

In the first week of September the Rumanians poured through all the Transylvanian passes, moving west out

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of Moldavia and north out of Wallachia. The Teuton forces drew back, with the purpose of organizing a counter-offensive. Within a fortnight about a quarter of the area of Transylvania had been "redeemed." In the south-eastern angle of the province the Rumanians had penetrated to a depth of fifty miles.

But the farther west and north they moved the farther they got away from the Russians and from Sarraill. And while the Russians and Sarraill were still inactive the Teuton armies struck at the isolated Rumanians from three directions.

The Rumanian campaign was Germany's most finished military achievement. It far outclassed the Serbian campaign of 1915, for Serbia was vastly outnumbered, lacked big guns, was beyond any Allied assistance, and never had a fighting chance. The Rumanians were hardly inferior in numbers and the Russians stood only a few marches away. Rumania's downfall was due simply to a brilliant economy of force on Germany's part and a lamentably ineffective employment of it on the part of the Allies.

The chief credit for the Rumanian envelopment goes to Mackensen. He was in command in Bulgaria. He boldly stripped the Macedonian front, ignoring the threat of an Allied offensive up the Vardar. Gathering together some German, Bulgarian, and Turkish

divisions, he invaded the Dobrudja early in September. In a week his right wing had reached the Black Sea coast south of Constanza, his centre had stormed Silistria and his left wing taken Turtukai. The fall of these two last fortresses left Rumania with no bridge-heads on the Danube south and south-east of Bucharest.

Mackensen's objective was the railroad from Bucharest to Constanza, crossing the Danube at Chernavoda. If this were cut, the Dobrudja would be lost to Rumania. On October 21st the Rumanian and Russian forces covering the railroad line were defeated and both Chernavoda and Constanza had to be evacuated. General Sakharov was sent down to reorganize the Allied armies in the northern neck of the Dobrudja. But he eventually retreated across the Danube into Moldavia.

The whole southern frontier of Rumania was now uncovered. Falkenhayn began on September 19th to clear the northern border. He enveloped and completely routed the Rumanians at Hermannstadt, in Transylvania, north of the Red Tower Pass. Then he trapped another Rumanian army near Cronstadt. Coming south through the Red Tower Pass Falkenhayn cut the railroad from the Iron Gates to Craiova and isolated the Rumanian forces in Western Rumania. Avarescu, the Rumanian commander-in-chief, tried to

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make a stand on the line of the Alt River. But he was immediately outflanked on the north by German troops pushing through the Törzburg Pass and on the south by a force which Mackensen sent across the Danube toward Alexandria.

The situation in Wallachia now became hopeless. There was no way to save Bucharest from the German armies converging toward it from the north, west, and south. A fortress as strong as Antwerp, it was wisely abandoned by the retreating Rumanians, without a fight. It would have been the grave of an army attempting to defend it.

Mackensen entered the Rumanian capital on December 6th—105 days after Rumania had declared war on Austria-Hungary. But he didn't tarry long. The pursuit of the Rumanians, reinforced by some Russian infantry and cavalry, continued until the end of December. All Wallachia was cleared. The remnants of the Rumanian armies were grouped on a line extending east and west from Braila, on the Danube, to Fokshani, near the junction of the south-western Carpathians with the Transylvanian Alps. Though both Braila and Fokshani were taken a little later by the Germans, this line remained practically intact all through 1917 and up to the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest.

Mackensen had won a series of sensational victories at a very slight cost. He had reduced the length of the German-Bulgarian front in the Balkans from nine hundred miles to about two hundred. He had opened many new lines of communication with Constantinople and added a new principality of more than thirty thousand square miles to German Middle Europe. Most important of all, he had annexed a kingdom almost as valuable as Hungary as a producer of foodstuffs.

It cannot detract from Mackensen's achievement that Allied generalship—or lack of it—played generously into his hand. He banked on the paralyzing effects of Allied disunity of command. But he seized his opportunities unerringly and exploited them to the full.

Rumania's fate was pitiful. She had a right to think that she had been ruthlessly sacrificed to the self-deceptions of Allied policy. About the time that Chernavoda fell, Premier Lloyd George was saying in the British House of Commons: "We and our Allies are working in concert and everything that is possible is being done to help Rumania."

What bitter irony! Allied statesmen in the West were still victims of the obsession that they could save Rumania by an offensive on the Somme. "Everything

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that is possible!" With Constantine still on the throne and Sarraïl still fighting inside Greek territory!

Many Western Allied writers have tried to shoulder on Russia the blame for Rumania's downfall. Russian military aid to Rumania was certainly disproportionate to Russian man power. But that was not altogether Russia's fault. She had yielded to the urgings of Italy, France, and Great Britain when she advanced the date of her great summer offensive.

Stürmer and Protopopoff are accused of having forced Rumania into the war at an inopportune moment and then deserting her. These two reactionaries were intriguing for peace at any price with Germany. But Russia alone could not compel Rumania to draw the sword. Great Britain, France, and Italy, all signed the treaty of alliance. It was the business of the Allied Military Council to know whether the plan of strategy recommended to Rumania was sound or not, and whether the promises of co-operation held out were genuine and redeemable.

Russia actually gave Rumania much more assistance than the international compact required her to give. France, Great Britain, and Italy, the three chief contributors to the Salonica army, gave no assistance which was not a mockery. If the Allied Council knew that Sarraïl would not or could not break through the



southern Bulgarian barrier, it would have been only fair-dealing on its part to insist on Rumania's prolonging her neutrality.

The Western Allies failed entirely to grasp the situation created by the sacrifice of Rumania. Their statesmen and generals were living in a world of unreality. What had happened on the East Front in 1915 and 1916, was still a riddle to them. They still exaggerated Russia's strength and underestimated the strength of the Teutonic Powers.

An Inter-Allied conference was held at Petrograd at the end of January, 1917. There was a strategic commission and a political commission. General Gourko, who presided at the strategic meetings, tells how he endeavoured to get permission for Premier Bratiano of Rumania to attend the political conferences. Bratiano was finally invited to one meeting. The representatives of the major Western Powers declined to give him a general invitation on the ground that it would create a precedent, compelling the next Inter-Ally conference to receive a representative from Belgium, from Portugal, and from Serbia, as well as from Rumania. As if it was not also Serbia's, Rumania's, and Belgium's war!

The strategic commission had a harmonious and successful meeting. Plans for 1917 were drawn up

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and the military representatives of the Western Powers started home, without the least suspicion that what the Russian General Staff promised would never be fulfilled by the Russian armies and the Russian people. Only three or four weeks after the Inter-Allied conference adjourned, the Czar was deposed and Russia was in revolution. The fiction of a military alliance with the Western Entente nations was to be maintained for some months to come. But the Russian military structure had lost its corner-stone. And the political necessities of the Revolution were to turn Russia quickly from a friend to a critic of Allied policy—from a militant to a “peace-at-any-price” nation.

Stürmer and Protopopoff would have made peace with Germany on Germany's terms for the sake of saving the Romanoff dynasty. After destroying the army, the Revolutionary leaders discovered that they had to go to Germany hat in hand in order to save the Revolution.

Germany didn't directly foment the Duma revolt. She would have preferred to do business with the monarchy. But when conditions had become ripe for the Czar's dethronement, Russia's days as an Entente belligerent were numbered. Civil war had finished the work of Hindenburg and Mackensen.

## CHAPTER XVI

### GERMANY CHALLENGES AMERICA

THE crisis of the war was reached in the winter months of 1917, when the German Government suddenly decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare. This decision was made over the head of the Chancellor and the German Foreign Office. It ran counter to the military policy which Hindenburg had been pursuing. It represented a return to the fatal obsessions of Tirpitz.

The Germans had nearly won the war. Rumania had succumbed. Russia was about to yield. Germany had become master of Central and Eastern Europe. But at the moment when prudence counselled her to secure the fruits of her Eastern conquests, she turned again to the West to seek new quarrels and new enemies. Germany had everything to gain and nothing to lose by continuing to consolidate her Continental position. She had little to gain and everything to lose by venturing on a campaign of piracy on the high seas.

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Of what avail was it to put the Russian colossus out of the war and then drag in the United States, an opponent ten times more dangerous than Russia? But Germany, in January, 1917, was in a mood to defy prudence and scoff at reason. In that mood she was willing to sacrifice the substance of victory on the continent of Europe to the shadowy dream of an empire beyond the seas.

The history of the crisis is still obscure. Hindenburg's appointment in the summer of 1916 to succeed Falkenhayn had seemed to put the "Easterners" in control of the situation.

Hindenburg looked with distrust on the U-boat venture. Bethmann-Hollweg was anxious to keep U-boat activities within the scope of maritime law. All through 1916, Germany had shown an inclination to regard the so-called submarine blockade of French and British ports as a relative failure—a failure to such an extent, at least, that it was not worth while risking war with the United States for the sake of continuing it.

In the *Sussex* note of April 10, 1916, and the additional note of May 8, 1916, Jagow, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, gave the United States assurances that "merchant vessels, both within and without the area declared as naval war zones,

shall not be sunk without warning and without saving human lives, unless those ships attempt to escape or offer resistance."

Jagow expressly reserved the right to withdraw these assurances, if American diplomatic pressure did not move Great Britain to modify the rigours of the German food blockade. But it was reasonable to infer from the tone of the note, that the German Government was not binding itself to go back presently to the old methods as a matter of international punctilio. The United States, at least, accepted the view that Germany would not resume indiscriminate submarine warfare unless she found paying military reasons for doing so.

The period of truce definitely inaugurated by the *Sussex* note, continued all through the year. Verdun and the Somme had sobered the Teuton extremists. But the glittering Rumanian triumph of October and November went to Germany's head. Here was another supposed proof of Teuton invincibility. A new enemy had appeared and had been swiftly vanquished. Should the fear of attracting still another enemy now deter Germany from revenging herself on Great Britain for the discomforts and annoyances of food rationing?

Even before the war Germany had had her school of Easterners and her school of Westerners. The

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former held that Russia was the real rival to be put out of the way and that the objective of Germany's next military venture must be the Russian border provinces. The latter, composed chiefly of the naval clique, the mercantile classes, and the manufacturing magnates of the Rhineland and Westphalia, held, on the contrary, that as the result of the next war, Belgium and the French mineral and manufacturing districts must be acquired and Great Britain forced to admit Germany to partnership as mistress of the seas.

These last-named powerful interests now clamoured for new offensives in France and an extension of submarine warfare. They had been kept under in 1916. But they had stimulated the building of new and larger U-boats. And when German self-esteem was suddenly inflated by Mackensen's startling victories on the Danube, they found it comparatively easy to get a hearing once more in the highest military councils.

The winter of 1917 also marked the rising of Ludendorff's star. He had been known in inner military and political circles as the real creator of Hindenburg's reputation. He had stood in the shadow for two years and a half. Now he began to emerge and demand consideration on his own account. Ludendorff's assumption of power coincided with the change in policy, which brought Germany into conflict with the United

States. It is difficult, therefore, to escape the conclusion that he associated himself deliberately with the elements which demanded war to the knife against Allied and neutral shipping, however this relapse into barbarism might affect American relations.

Ludendorff served the ends of the U-boat extremists and they served his. He became a political and military dictator and remained such through 1917 and 1918. He made and unmade chancellors and ministries. As Chief Quartermaster-General, he assumed control of industries, transportation, and rationing. He absolutely controlled the press. His word was law on all questions of domestic politics. His power altogether eclipsed the Kaiser's. Germany obeyed him implicitly and the ruin of her hopes can be laid at no other man's door.

After the war Ludendorff himself attributed German defeat in part to the poor work of the Intelligence Bureau of the War Office. The Intelligence Bureau probably followed the established German custom of telling the government and the High Command what it thought they wanted to hear. But its poor work could not excuse a decision which, it was plain, would leave America no alternative but war. Whatever reports came from German agents in the United States, it ought to have been manifest to any competent states-

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man or General Staff officer in Berlin that Germany must choose between living up to the *Sussex* note guarantees, or fighting the United States.

Germany had long presumed on the disinclination of the American Government to abandon a sheltered and profitable rôle of neutrality. The *Lusitania* negotiations had unavoidably created the impression in Europe that the United States would go to very great lengths, in order to keep out of the conflict.

The note of February 10, 1915, in response to the German "war zone" proclamation, was a brusque affirmation of normal American policy. It gave notice that the government at Washington would hold Germany to "strict accountability" for the destruction of an American vessel or the lives of American citizens. It announced that the United States would take any steps necessary "to safeguard American lives and property and to secure to American citizens the full enjoyment of their acknowledged rights on the high seas."

This note was apparently written in the lively confidence that Germany, in her own interest, would avoid murdering American citizens travelling on Allied or neutral merchant ships. The *Lusitania* tragedy dispelled that hope. And when the American Government not only failed to hold Germany to "strict



accountability" for the massacre of American passengers on the *Lusitania*, but also declined to make the military preparations necessary to enforce the policy outlined in the note of February 10th, Germany may naturally have jumped to the conclusion that the United States was much more concerned about preserving her own neutrality than she was about maintaining neutral rights at sea.

Superficially, at least, this conclusion may have been justified by the correspondence in the *Lusitania* case. In that the contentions of the note of February 10th were never satisfied. But it became more and more difficult to waive satisfaction of them in later cases. Many powerful elements in the United States never concurred in the Government's solicitous pro-peace views. And their protests began to modify the Administration's attitude.

While the *Lusitania* negotiations were still in progress the White Star liner *Arabic* was torpedoed off the Irish coast and two American passengers were lost. In order to allay American irritation and also to strengthen its own arguments in the *Lusitania* controversy (for the *Arabic* was west bound and could not be carrying munitions or other contraband), Germany now recognized the advisability of seeking a *modus vivendi*. On September 1st Count Bernstorff delivered his famous

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memorandum to the American State Department. One paragraph of it read:

Liners will not be sunk by our submarines without warning and without safety of the lives of non-combatants, provided that the liners do not try to escape or offer resistance.

The use of the word "liners" showed that the guarantee was limited to one class of merchant vessels. But the German memorandum involved a partial recognition of American claims. This recognition may have been little more than a temporizing makeshift on Germany's part. Between August, 1915, when the *Arabic* was destroyed, and March 24, 1916, when the passenger steamer *Sussex* was torpedoed in the English Channel, there were various instances of illegal submarine attack. Yet German diplomacy was growing more and more cautious. The much stiffer tone of the American protest in the *Sussex* case and the increasing agitation in the United States for military preparedness led Berlin to admit having violated its earlier assurances and even to enlarge the *Arabic* pledge so as to include merchant shipping of every description.

The American Government had threatened to break off diplomatic relations unless Germany abandoned her illegal methods of submarine warfare. Berlin had

yielded to that threat. So, on the face of the record, Germany could not hope, in 1917, to draw new "war zones" about Great Britain, Ireland, France, and Italy, and sink on sight enemy or neutral shipping entering them, without adding the United States to her already long list of enemies.

What induced Germany—beyond mere mass hysteria—to brave war with the United States by unleashing the submarine? A ruthless U-boat campaign undoubtedly appealed to the politicians and the public as a short-cut to peace. But the military leaders were obliged to give at least casual consideration to the question whether it would not prove instead a short-cut to defeat.

Assuming that the decision was primarily a military one, there is only one rational explanation of it. That is that the German General Staff absolutely discounted American military power. Its technical experts assured the German public again and again that America could not raise and train armies, within two years, and that even if she did raise and train them within that time, she could never get them across the Atlantic. Had these two assumptions held good, the German High Command could eventually have justified its challenge to the United States. For America would have entered the war only on the economic side, and

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she was already to a large extent an Allied munitions maker and money lender.

But the German military leaders didn't realize, in making the momentous decision of January, 1917, that they were basing their strategy not on experience but on hypothesis. They were banking on the favourable operation of circumstances largely beyond their control. Whether America would turn out one, two, or four million well-trained troops was a matter for her alone to decide. She could do it, if she wanted to do it. Whether she could deliver one, two, or four million troops in France was a matter for her and her European Allies to determine. It was only a question of getting the tonnage. Germany's sole power to intervene lay in the U-boat, whose capacity to "blockade" the French and British coasts and to drive enemy and neutral shipping out of the North Atlantic lanes had not yet been demonstrated, or even more than casually indicated. From the German point of view war with the United States was to figure as a minor incident of the great U-boat campaign. But, as it turned out, the great U-boat campaign really figured as a minor incident in the war with the United States.

The new German submarine raiders lived up to expectations for about six months. They showed an

alarming ability to destroy enemy and neutral shipping faster than it could be replaced by new construction. But the peak of destructiveness was reached much too soon. Before the bulk of the American Expeditionary Army was ready to be dispatched across the Atlantic, the submarine was, in a military sense, a confessed failure. German U-boats could not stop American transports. Nor, after October, 1917, was there any prospect of their reducing Allied and neutral cargo-carrier tonnage below the safety point.

Against these trivial credits must be set the enormous debits of the U-boat campaign. The accession of the United States to the Entente many times overbalanced the retirement of Russia. It allayed all the financial worries of the Allied governments. It greatly restored French morale in the critical year 1917. It presented a clear guarantee of victory to the Allies, if they could only hold out until 1919. Even in 1918, America furnished Foch with the "strategic reserve" which enabled him to start his "Victory Offensive." She supplied him with the six hundred thousand men who cleared the west bank of the Meuse from Verdun to Sedan and cut the communications between Ludendorff's southern and the northern army groups. "The Americans can never arrive," said the complacent War Lords and Intelligence Bureau experts in Berlin.

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By the time Germany was ready to solicit an armistice the American forces in France actually outnumbered the British forces there.

Look also at the situation which would have developed had Germany had intelligence enough to hold the activities of her U-boats within legal bounds. The new "blockade zone" proclamation was issued on January 31, 1917. Diplomatic relations with the United States were broken off on February 3d. The United States declared war on April 6th. But already in March the Czar had been dethroned and Russia had practically ceased to function as a belligerent. After March, 1917, Germany had only to await the psychological moment for appropriating the lion's share of the Romanoff inheritance.

Russia's withdrawal from the war after the Czar's downfall was inevitable, and was speedily indicated. The Revolution was, on the surface, the work of the politicians of the Duma. Yet the Duma was, in reality, politically weaker than the Czar was. It represented the masses less than he did. It never obtained the support of the army. Instead, the army and the workmen began organizing a system of committee government of their own, to whose multifarious whims the Duma and the provisional government, which it had set up, became slavishly subject.

The first urge of the new freedom was toward demobilization and peace. Both the original Duma and the modified Kerensky governments yielded more or less consciously to that urge by pleading for a restatement of the Entente's war aims. Kerensky, as a socialist of the international school, felt compelled to advocate indirect negotiations with Germany through the medium of international socialist conferences of the pacifist and pro-German kind so frequently called to meet in Stockholm. Thus he quickly brought Revolutionary Russia into conflict with the war policies of Great Britain, France, and Italy. He renounced Russian claims on Constantinople, and publicly embraced the principle of "no annexations and no indemnities."

Kerensky was nationalistic and anti-German, however. And, unlike Lenine and Trotzky, he was unpurchasable. He favoured a continuance of the war for the purpose of recovering the Russian territory still in the hands of the Germans. But he didn't understand making war. His schemes for democratizing the army quickly destroyed its discipline and fighting power.

Kerensky approved the spasmodic Korniloff offensive of July, 1917, and even went to the front to harangue the troops selected to take part in it. The Russian army was better munitioned in the summer of

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1917 than it had been at any time since August, 1914. Korniloff had some success at first on the Galician front, where he had only second and third class Austro-Hungarian troops to deal with. But his attack had hardly got under way before it collapsed. Several Russian divisions mutinied and retreated. German reinforcements arrived, restored the Austro-Hungarian lines, and then drove the demoralized Russians out of Galicia and Bukowina.

By August 1, 1917, the Russian armies had practically ceased to exist as armies. They were only mobs in uniform awaiting the signal to demobilize. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers deserted, finding the process of demobilization too slow for them. There was no sector of the whole front which the Germans and Austro-Hungarians could not now penetrate at will. The Germans had been unable to take Riga in 1915 or in 1916. But in September, 1917, it fell to them at a trifling cost. General Letchitsky could make only a nominal defence. The German fleet then lent a hand in capturing the islands in the Gulf of Riga, thus opening the way to Reval. Had the German High Command wanted to do so, it could easily have taken Reval and Petrograd in the fall of 1917. It could have gone to Moscow, too, if it hadn't preferred to turn west and overwhelm the Italians at Caporetto.



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From March, 1917, on, Germany was free to impose her will on Russia. It was only a question of time and method. If Ludendorff had not mortgaged the future by challenging the United States, he would have had an indefinite period—two years, three years, or until the end of the war—in which to organize the military resources of Russia against the Entente. Napoleon turned Poland into a recruiting camp. Why should Germany not have tried to exploit in like manner the man power of Poland, Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Lithuania, and the Ukraine?

But America's entry into the war materially shortened Germany's period of grace in the East. The Muscovite oyster had to be opened and eaten quickly. Freedom of action in Russia was guaranteed through 1917; for Ludendorff knew that he could easily hold the French and British with the forces he had on the Western Front. Freedom of action might also be guaranteed for a part of 1918. But beyond that point nothing was clear.

Two ways of approach to the Eastern problem were open to Germany. The first was to attack in force in the summer and fall of 1917 and extort a peace from a Russian Government still partly bourgeois in character, fearful of the revolutionary terrorists, and glad to sustain itself through a German alliance. This course

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would have involved military intervention on behalf of Kerensky against the Bolsheviks or on behalf of Korniloff against Kerensky. It would have duplicated Germany's policy in Finland in supporting Mannerheim against the Reds. Possibly it would have involved a little greater military effort. But the results would have been worth while; for Germany would have won that same credit in Russia generally as she won in Finland as the deliverer of the non-proletarian element from the tyranny of a proletariat dictatorship. A German protectorate might have been accepted with a certain measure of gratitude because of its political and economic benefits.

The alternative course was to stand off and let the poison of the Revolution do its work. This policy, which Ludendorff adopted, allowed him to denude the Eastern Front. But it wasted precious time. Germany undoubtedly accelerated the Bolshevik counter-revolution. Lenine and Trotzky may or may not have been on the German payroll. Their personal interests coincided with Germany's interests. They were willing to pay almost any price for the opportunity to try out their theory of Ghengis Khanism, disguised as Marxian justice—of military terrorism camouflaged as socialistic democracy.

Sitting tight on the East Front for a year, while

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fomenting the Bolshevik infection, would have brought Germany no ill results, if America had not been all the while preparing. Even before the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest had been signed, American reinforcements were arriving in France. Germany had thus lost twelve golden months, if her military leaders ever had it in their minds to fill up their waning divisions with Poles, Lithuanians, Finns, Ests, and Ukrainians, just as Napoleon the First filled up his with Italians, Spaniards, Netherlanders, Poles, Westphalians, Saxons, Rhinelanders, and South Germans.

Ludendorff thought it cheaper to use chicanery in dealing with Revolutionary Russia than to use force. In order to encourage the anti-Ally revolutionary leaders and to tempt the Petrograd government and the peoples of the border provinces into seeking peace, the German Reichstag had passed, on July 19, 1917, a hypocritical resolution, declaring its opposition to any "forced annexations" of territory. This was a crafty echo of the Kerensky programme of "no annexations and no indemnities." When Germany and Austria-Hungary finally got ready to meet Russia at the peace table, they sought to attract representatives of the other Allied Powers to Brest-Litovsk by announcing, through Count Czernin, that they actu-

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ally favoured "no annexations and no indemnities" and also the right of "self-determination for subject peoples."

Lenine and Trotzky probably knew how worthless these protestations were. The Russian border peoples had no means of knowing. When, therefore, General Hoffmann brutally raised the German mask at the peace conference, these peoples realized that they had been made the victims of German perfidy. Expecting national independence, they were put off with the barest and emptiest symbols of it. They accepted the Teuton yoke, cynically camouflaged as "self-determination." There was nothing else for them to do. But they accepted it—all of them but Finland—with sullen disappointment.

The Germans did Finland a real service by crushing the Bolshevist Finnish army and restoring order. Had America been kept out of the war, Finnish divisions would eventually have fought in Ludendorff's western armies. So might Lithuanian, Baltic Province, Polish, and Ukrainian divisions, if Ludendorff had only torn up the fatal war zone Admiralty proclamation of January 31, 1917.

In fact, there is little reason to doubt that Germany would have made her Western Front impregnable, through eastern help, if she had only had the sagacity,

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after once deciding to drop illegitimate U-boat activities, to stick to that decision to the end.

As it was, her strategy on both fronts in 1917 was hampered by an uneasy consciousness that the U-boat had failed or was about to fail. She didn't strike resolutely against Russia. Nor did she venture to transfer her eastern divisions west for the purpose of striking resolutely against Great Britain and France. The forces which were used by Hutier in September and October to take Riga—a perfectly superfluous effort at that date—could at least have been employed more profitably to break the lines of the Salonica entrenched camp, thus loosening the last foothold of the Allies on the Balkan Peninsula. Obviously the blow which the Italian armies could not parry on the Isonzo, could not have been parried by the much weaker Allied armies in Macedonia.

The Hindenburg strategical retirement out of the Noyon salient had been planned before the U-boat decision was made. It was about the last flash of real military inspiration at German Grand Headquarters. After that comes the long Ludendorff régime of indecision and bluster, of vacillation here and reckless plunges there, of the generalship of the gambling table.

According to the calculations of the men who ordered the resumption of indiscriminate submarine warfare,

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America would never fight in France. According to General Hoffmann, the dictator at Brest-Litovsk, Ludendorff telephoned him, in February, 1918, to "sign a peace—any peace—with any Russian who can write his name." Hoffmann quotes Ludendorff as adding: "The Americans are coming, and we need every corps we have on the Western Front. Make peace with Russia and release our armies there at once."

In February, 1918, there were no first-class, and comparatively few second class, German troops left on the Eastern Front. But what is to be thought of a strategy which did not appreciate until February, 1918, the importance of the time relation between peace in Russia and the arrival of the American reinforcement in France and was astonished to discover that the latter was appearing too soon and the former had come too late?

Germany's challenge to the United States in January, 1917, remains, from the military point of view, the most inexplicable mystery of the war. It was not war. It was madness. It eclipsed the first Napoleon's madneses—the march to Moscow or the harebrained effort to seat Joseph on the throne of Spain. It was worthy of a *poseur* strategist, like William II. It was one of those caprices of judgment of which destiny loves to make men and nations the sport. The U-boat pro-

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clamation was the death warrant of Teutonism. It ended the German dream of world empire. No German is ever likely to admit direct responsibility for it. His own people would stone him. But civilization would owe him a monument.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE WEST FRONT IN 1917—CAMBRAI

MILITARY operations slowed down considerably in 1917. The year 1916 had seen Verdun, the Somme, the Brusiloff offensive, and the conquest of Rumania. The Teuton allies attempted only one major offensive in 1917—that against Italy. On the West Front the French and British confined themselves, in the main, to carefully localized attacks. Allenby captured Jerusalem near the close of the year.

The reason for this comparative relaxation of activities has already been indicated. The year 1917 was a period of readjustment. The entry of America into the war had affected both Allied and German military policy. Germany had her eyes on the sea, watching nervously for the accomplishment of the miracle promised by the partisans of unrestricted U-boat warfare. The French and the British in the West, particularly the French, wisely economized their strength while awaiting the coming of the American reinforcement. Up to 1917, it was to Germany's interest to



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fight a delaying battle in the West. Now delay served the purposes of the Allies.

German policy fell between two stools. The logical accompaniment of the renewal of submarine piracy would have been a speeding-up of the attack—first on the East Front and then on the West Front. But Germany unwisely delayed forcing a peace on Russia. Hindenburg's plans for a permanent defensive in the West had only matured in the winter and spring of 1917. It was difficult to change them. The colossal Hindenburg Line had been constructed as a barrier which could be easily and economically held. Even after the U-boat's inability to stop the flow of American troops to Europe had become patent, Germany still required months to shift in the West from a defensive basis to an offensive basis. Ludendorff was, in fact, unable to organize his attack on the French and British until March, 1918. The best he could do in the fall of 1917 was to go south and deal a staggering blow to Italy.

The first British operation in the West was the battle of Arras. This was in purpose and method a continuation of the battle of the Somme. It was a military success only in so far as it compelled an extension to the north of the retirement which Hindenburg had already effected out of the Noyon salient.

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The German withdrawal had not affected the front from Arras to Lens. The new enemy line joined the old one at a point just below Arras. The result of two months of fighting was to push the Germans back about five miles east of Arras and to put Lens into a dangerous pocket. The British won some valuable positions. But in the main the operation was only another experiment in attrition.

The battle began on Easter Monday, April 9th. On that day Canadian troops took Vimy Ridge—one of the chief objectives of the battle of Artois, fought two years before. On succeeding days the British penetrated the entire original German defence system between Arras and Lens and forced the enemy as far east as the so-called Oppy switch line, an alternative system, cutting north from the Hindenburg line in the neighbourhood of Croisilles. Still farther back was a third system, leaving the Hindenburg Line at Quéant and terminating at Drocourt.

In the first week of the battle the British had been uniformly successful. They had captured about fifteen thousand prisoners and two hundred guns. The power of the offensive to break through the fore zone of the modified German defence system was clearly established.

But a new obstacle was now encountered. That was the counter-attack after the break-through. From

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April 23d to the beginning of June the British armies struggled in vain to make any substantial impression on the Oppy switch line, because every slight advance was met with a German counter-attack. Thus the old trench deadlock was perpetuated in a new form. It was Verdun over again. Farms, villages, clumps of woods, or hill slopes were taken and retaken many times. It was a grinding process, as exhausting for the defensive as for the offensive. That is the most that can be said of the bloody struggles east and south-east of Arras. They served no broad, strategic purpose and Sir Douglas Haig finally broke them off, shifting his attack north to Flanders.

One lasting result had been achieved, however. Possession of Vimy Ridge made the Allied front in the Arras-Lens sector secure. When the great German irruption came in the spring of 1918, it overflowed all the territory to the south of Arras, which had been yielded to the Allies in the Somme fighting and through Hindenburg's retirement. It spread, north of Lens, far up the Lys Valley toward Hazebrouck. But it beat harmlessly against the Lens-Arras barrier. And so long as this held Ludendorff lacked the "elbow room" to develop his attack down the Somme toward Amiens or up the Lys Valley toward Calais.

From June to December British effort in the West

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was concentrated on the front about Ypres. The length and persistence of this offensive suggested a real strategical objective. It may have been the hope of the British High Command to reach Roulers and Lille and to compel the Germans to abandon the Belgian North Sea coast, with the submarine bases of Bruges, Ostend, and Zeebrugge. A similar operation, in the fall of 1918, quickly attained all these objectives. But the German defence in 1917 was as adequate in Flanders as it was in Artois or on the Aisne. It could not prevent local Allied gains. But it could keep them within almost negligible limits.

The first British exploit was the capture of Messines Ridge, south-east of Ypres. The British had held on to Ypres since 1914, although it lay on low ground, commanded by the German batteries on the heights surrounding the city to the north-east, east, and south-east. As it stood in 1917, the Ypres salient was almost impossible to defend against a serious German attack. It was desirable to enlarge and strengthen it, apart from any designs on Lille or the Belgian coast. The Messines operation began and ended the same day—June 7th. It was executed with remarkable precision. The ridge was taken at slight cost, the number of prisoners captured—seven thousand—almost equalling the total British casualties. Messines, although an isolated

## The West Front in 1917—Cambrai 329

and minor engagement, demonstrated more strikingly than ever the growing power, freedom, and economic value of the offensive.

Encouraged by their easy success at Messines the Allies undertook a series of similar attacks in Flanders, which lasted from July 31st until the winter rains set in. These operations gradually cleared the heights east of Ypres and recovered the ground north of the city which was lost in the German "gas" attack of April, 1915. They carried the eastern bulge of the Ypres salient beyond the Messines and Passchendaele ridges, bringing Menin and Roulers under Allied artillery fire.

But in any wide strategic view these results were nearly valueless. The railroad artery from Menin to Roulers and thence north to the Belgian coast district, was not cut. Nor did the ridges won serve, like Vimy Ridge, as a bulwark against a new German irruption. In the spring of 1918 the Messines heights were stormed by the Germans early in the course of the Lys Valley offensive. The Passchendaele heights had to be evacuated without a battle. The sweeping eastern curve of the salient became a straight line, skirting the eastern edge of Ypres. Ypres itself was only saved by Arnim's severe defeat on April 29, 1918, south-west of the city.

In the Flanders battles the German open defence had

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one of its severest tests. The "pill box" fore zone seldom held the Allied attack. But it wasn't intended to do that. The Allies got through the front line with great regularity. But they never passed the mid zone. They never accomplished anything like a real break-through. The best evidence of this is the fact that after three months of hard pounding the Germans had been thrown back only three or four miles on an average and still barred the way to Roulers and Lille. In Flanders, as on the Arras front, the war remained essentially a war of attrition and deadlock.

The French began an offensive on the Aisne front a week after the British opened the battle of Arras. The attack was made over exceedingly difficult ground. The battle line ran from a point north of Soissons to a point north of Rheims—a stretch of twenty-five miles. The objective of the French was the Chemin des Dames—the famous road constructed by Louis XV, which crowns the commanding east and west ridge separating the Aisne Valley from the Ailette Valley.

The French also scored marked initial successes. In three days—from April 16th to April 19th—they took seventeen thousand prisoners and seventy-five guns. The German first line was broken through without difficulty. Hindenburg retorted with violent counter-attacks. By May the French offensive had

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been worn down. Craonne, at the eastern end of the Chemin des Dames, had been reached. The approaches to the western end, east of Vauxaillon, had also been seized.

But the Aisne operation had been exceedingly costly. The troops engaged in it thought that there had been insufficient artillery preparation. There were rumours of a serious impairment of morale. In the fall of 1916 General Nivelle had replaced Joffre as Commander-in-Chief of the French armies. The battle of the Aisne had been fought under his direction. It had hardly ended before he was removed. Pétain replaced him as Commander-in-Chief and Foch was made Chief-of-Staff.

These changes had an immediate effect on French military policy. France had borne an enormous burden in 1916. The Somme had followed Verdun and the losses in those two campaigns probably ran well over five hundred thousand. The French, with their highly organized military machine and their limited resources, never relished a mere war of attrition. And already in May, 1917, Pétain and Foch saw that much better use could be made of the armies France had in the field than to exhaust them in premature and usurious offensives. The man power of the United States would be available within sixteen or eighteen months.

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And with that reinforcement the Allies would be in a position to try for something more worth while than a decision through mutual exhaustion.

The French armies needed a rest in 1917. In that year also civilian morale was undermined by weaknesses in governmental policy and a widespread campaign of defeatism. The Bolo Pasha, Humbert, *Bonnet Rouge*, Malvy, and Caillaux disclosures were soon to uncover the extent of the insidious anti-war and pro-German propaganda. Factionalism had again become pronounced in the Chamber of Deputies. The Briand government fell in March, 1917. The Ribot government, which succeeded, was upset in September. Then came the Painlevé government, which lasted until November. Only when Clemenceau came into power with his programme of "I make war" and his pledges to prosecute defeatists, no matter how powerful their political connections, was France again able to emerge from the shadow of pacifistic war weariness.

It was Pétain's task, in 1917, to build up the French armies, restore their spirit and confidence and fit them for the great rôle they were to play in 1918. He did this by a wise economy in offensive operations and a skilful and sparing defence, when attacked.

Hindenburg was unwilling to give up the Chemin des Dames. The Crown Prince of Prussia, who had



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nominal command in this sector, spent most of the summer trying to loosen the grip of the French on the two ends of this famous highroad. He lost about one hundred thousand men in these fruitless attempts. Pétain bided his time. In October, after the German assaults had died down, he executed one of the most brilliant local operations of the war. Striking on a six-mile front, north-east of Soissons, he quickly penetrated the German line to the depth of a mile and half. The co-operation between the artillery, the tanks, the air-planes, and the infantry was admirable. Twelve thousand prisoners and two hundred guns were captured.

The German hold on the Chemin des Dames now became precarious. On November 1st the Crown Prince abandoned the entire ridge and withdrew to positions behind the Ailette River. These positions were held by the Germans until Ludendorff's drive for the Marne opened in May, 1918. But in the interval the mode of warfare on the Western Front had been revolutionized. Pétain advanced one mile and a half and was content to stop. The first day of the drive in May, 1918, saw the Germans at the Aisne; the second saw them at the Vesle. In five days they had pushed almost to Château-Thierry.

In October, 1917, such an advance would have seemed to be absolutely prohibited by the narrow limi-

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tations of rigid positional warfare. But even before the year 1917 ended, there was a startling demonstration of the fact that the era of those limitations was passing. The battle of Cambrai, fought in November, marked the sudden transition from positional fighting to open or semi-open fighting. It was, therefore, one of the turning points of the war. For if open fighting was to succeed trench fighting, so-called, the whole strategic problem on the West Front would be altered. The deadlock of 1915, 1916, and 1917, would be broken. The war would cease to wear the monotonous aspect of a mere process of usury. Strategy in the broad sense would again come into play and a decision, obtained by military insight and the superior handling of armies, could not be long postponed.

Cambrai caught everybody more or less off guard. It was a bold experiment, reflecting great credit on the British High Command. But its success so far surpassed expectations that no adequate preparations had been made to follow it up. After dreaming for three years of a real "break-through" the Allies all at once found themselves with a "break-through" on their hands. They hardly knew what to do with it. Before they were ready to exploit it the door of opportunity was rudely closed.

The city of Cambrai was one of the chief bastions

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of the Hindenburg zone. It was a vital centre of communications and base of supplies. Unlike St. Quentin, which was out on the fighting line and was partially encircled by the Allies, Cambrai lay nearly ten miles to the rear. Its security was taken for granted. Apparently it was less exposed than La Fère, or Douai, or Lille.

Sir Douglas Haig, therefore, took the Germans by surprise when he elected to attack on this front. He took them even more by surprise through the novelty of his tactics. Every other offensive had been heralded by artillery preparation of some sort, although the duration of "drum fire" had been materially lessened in 1917, compared with 1916, or even with 1915. Now the British dispensed with "drum fire" altogether. For the destruction of the obstacles in the German fore zone they depended entirely on the tanks.

Cambrai was the first battle in which the tank became the major offensive factor. Four hundred of these line breakers were collected and started forward at dawn on November 20th. The sky was overcast and artificial smoke clouds were also used to cover the advance. The result was that the tanks reached the German first line almost unobserved, crashed through and pushed on over the second line into the open. The German defence was stunned. Ten thousand

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prisoners were taken in a few hours by the supporting troops. The way lay clear for miles back toward Cambrai, and the line of the Scheldt River south toward Le Catelet.

The front broken by the British ran north-west and south-east—from a point east of Le Catelet to a point a little west of Quéant. After piercing the centre, a part of the British Third Army faced almost north, striking for the Cambrai-Bapaume highroad, with Bournon Wood as their immediate objective. Another part pushed east for the Scheldt, reaching the Scheldt Canal at Marcoing, and again, still further east, at Masnières and Crévecœur. A blunted salient was thus driven into the territory behind the Hindenburg Line, that line constituting the base, and the two sides meeting at an apex at Crévecœur, directly south of Cambrai. The extreme penetration from the base to the apex was between eight and nine miles.

Many soldiers who took part in the battle have recalled the exhilaration they felt in marching through a country almost untouched by the war. They had lived for months in the artificial desert which Hindenburg had created when he drew out of the Noyon salient. They had seen nothing but a barren waste, treeless, without vegetation, disfigured with ruins and shell holes. Now they were passing along well-kept roads

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and through up-standing villages and cultivated fields. It was an experience which could not fail to impress men accustomed to the forbidding limitations of the old positional warfare.

On November 21st the Third Army made some further gains. But German resistance on the north side of the triangle, nearest Cambrai, began to stiffen. It was the original hope of the British High Command to make at least a cavalry raid on Cambrai and destroy the stores collected there. But that idea was given up and General Byng's efforts were centred on holding Bournon Wood, whose heights commanded the city and a long stretch of the Scheldt Valley. To do more than that large reinforcements were required and these were not at hand. So up to November 26th the British fought desperately to clear the wood and hold it against continuous German counter-attacks. These proved too powerful and in the last days of November the British were barely holding their own on the northern face of the salient.

On November 30th a general counter-offensive was started by the Germans. It failed on the northern face and about the apex. But the southern face of the triangle was broken in and the whole British position was imperilled. Here the strange experiences of the first day's open fighting were repeated. German

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columns suddenly appeared far in the rear of the British lines. One British general was reported to have escaped from his headquarters clad in pajamas. A British hospital commander, Sir Conan Doyle reports, was astonished to find a German sentry posted at the hospital door and sent him out a cup of tea. American engineers at work far inside the lines, as they supposed, had to throw away their tools and borrow guns to defend themselves against enemy detachments.

The Cambrai salient crumpled up in a few hours. General Byng threw in his scanty reserves to save the southern front and rapidly withdrew his forces from the eastern and northern sectors. About half the area originally conquered had to be surrendered. The British lost one hundred guns and about six thousand prisoners.

This reverse, as dramatic as the initial victory was, obscured for a time the real value of Byng's achievement. He was not to blame for the ultimate failure of the operation; for he was not adequately supported. But the tactical results of the battle were of minor importance. Its significance in the history of the war lay in the fact that it had reintroduced open warfare. It was the last stage in the evolution from trench deadlock to the warfare of movement.

First, the trench had paralyzed the power of the

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offensive. Then the intensified artillery attack had destroyed the resisting power of the trench. The Hindenburg lightly held fore zone had succeeded the ponderous first-line defences. Now the tank had come in to neutralize the "pill box" frontal defence, against which "drum fire" was useless. The cycle was complete. It was only necessary to develop the Byng tank attack in order to make every defence line vulnerable. But one dependable weapon was left in the hands of the defensive—the infantry counter-attack. And when the infantry counter-attack constituted the chief and final resource of the defensive, infantry had recovered its proud and ancient status. Open or semi-open methods of warfare were inescapable.

Byng's attack at Cambrai was the forerunner of the Hutier attack at St. Quentin, in March, 1918, from which the British Fifth Army was to suffer so deplorably. It was equally the forerunner of Foch's relentless "all-front" offensives.

The German counter-attack had stopped the British drive for Cambrai, just as it had stopped the drive for Roulers and Lille, in the north, and the drive in April, east of Arras, for Douai—if Douai was at that time Haig's ultimate objective. But the counter-attack is a costly expedient. Its continual use is an admission on the part of the commander employing it that his

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system of defence has become ineffective. He supplements the defensive by a limited local offensive. Thus he incurs all the tactical risks and handicaps of the offensive, without enjoying its compensating strategical advantages—the chief among the latter being ample time to organize attacks and freedom in the choice of the field of action.

This policy of counter-attack as a prop to the defensive was distasteful to the German General Staff. Circumstances over which the German commanders had no control compelled its adoption on an increasing scale in 1917. Freytag-Loringhoven makes this point clear in his *Deductions from the World War*. Although the Germans considered themselves superior to the Allies in open warfare, they shrank instinctively from encouraging anything like a return to open warfare while they stood on the defensive on the Western Front. Freytag-Loringhoven says:

According to the notions that prevailed up to that time (to the time of the adoption of a strict defensive) the possibility might have been considered, where our troops were suffering heavy losses as a result of holding on under exposure to the fire of the enemy's heavy artillery and bomb-throwers, and where the latter had done destruction to our trenches, of allowing the enemy to break through and then driving him back again by means of the reserves at the back of the line. This procedure was, in fact, from the



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beginning employed several times with success at various sections of the front against bodies of the enemy's forces which had broken through. To extend it systematically to larger sections of the front, and thereby on our side to resort to a certain extent to the methods of the war of movement, seemed to the supreme command for a long time inadvisable, in view of the limited forces and artillery at their disposition.

It did not seem advisable to leave large sections of the front open to the enemy with a view to subsequently meeting him in a great offensive engagement on French or Belgian territory occupied by us, thereby giving the situation quite a different character from a strategic point-of-view. Such a counter-attack on a large scale would have involved the reconquest of the newly organized enemy positions, and if the counter-attack did not effect a complete recovery, this method would in course of time have amounted to the surrender of larger and larger portions of the enemy territory occupied by our troops. . . .

Moreover, quite apart from the moral factor, which in these days of extreme publicity has quite another significance than was formerly the case, and apart from the endeavours of the enemy press to exploit for their own ends even our most trifling reverses (such reverses as were inevitable from time to time) the objects at stake were far too precious to justify us in yielding up large stretches of territory, even if it were only temporarily. We had to strive to turn to the best possible account the productive district of Northern France, with its wealth of industries.

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But after Cambrai it was plain that the defensive must always contemplate the possibility of having large sections of the front broken, and of having to repair those breaches by considerable counter offensives. This change in the conditions of warfare operated against the Germans, just as the change to rigid positional warfare, at the end of 1914, operated against the Allies. Germany's natural policy was to maintain an alert defensive in the West. After the strength of the United States was thrown into the balance against her, it was more than ever to her interest that the value of the defensive should not be impaired. For if open or semi-open warfare became practicable again, Germany's hope of holding out against superior Allied numbers would quickly vanish.

Cambrai was therefore one more argument for that shift to the offensive which Ludendorff was about to make and for which he began preparing only a few weeks after his violent counter-attack had broken Byng's salient. But on an offensive basis Germany could not last long. A quick decision was needed. So Ludendorff felt constrained to stake all he had on a single throw. If he could not win in the first six months of 1918, he virtually obligated himself to concede victory to the Allies.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ITALY'S PART IN THE WAR

THE Wars of Liberation in the middle of the last century ended Austria's rule in Northern Italy. Magenta and Solferino freed Lombardy. Sadowa freed Venetia. From the political point-of-view, Italy attained unity and independence. But from the military point-of-view she failed to achieve security. The new kingdom was left with an Adriatic coast line destitute of harbours and naval bases. And the northern boundary, as traced on the map, was valueless because it lacked all the elements of a true military frontier. Austria still commanded the Italian Plain, because she retained the passes through the northern mountain barrier.

A glance at the map discloses Italy's predicament. There is hardly a shelter along the western Adriatic shore from the Straits of Otranto to the Gulf of Venice. But the eastern shore is rich in natural harbours—among them Cattaro, Fiume, Pola, and Trieste. The north-eastern frontier, as it was in 1914, was fairly defensible.

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But further west the Austrian Trentino projected like a huge sally-port into the heart of Northern Italy. Out of the Trentino six passes led to the Italian Plain, the westernmost being that of the Adige Valley, the historical corridor for Teutonic invasions. The natural military frontier of Italy in this region ran about one hundred miles to the north of the geographical one, covering the Brenner Pass and the Reschen Pass. So long as the Brenner Pass, the Upper Adige Valley, Trent, and the Val Sugana remained in Austrian hands, Italy was left with a neighbour intrenched within her gates. In case of war with Austria she would be tied down to a choice between a difficult defensive on the Trentino front and a precarious offensive along the Isonzo.

Italy's lack of a defensive frontier vitally affected her national policy. Austria was the hereditary enemy. But when anger at the French occupation of Tunis drove Italy into an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary, the union, though unnatural, served a defensive purpose. If Austro-Italian relations were not to remain openly hostile, the next best thing was to create a concord based on artificial interest. For Italy the entente with Austria-Hungary was never a matter of the heart. But it tided over a period of Italian depression and isolation. The Triple Alliance was effected in 1882 and lasted thirty-three years. During that

period the new Italian state had time to mature and consolidate.

But an artificial union of this sort couldn't endure. Italy and Austria-Hungary travelled divergent paths and had conflicting ambitions. Each viewed with distrust the other's aspirations in the Balkans. Italy still sought a foothold in Northern Africa and looked askance at the growing friendship between Germany and Turkey. When the Entente Powers guaranteed her a free hand in Tripoli she showed no compunctions about running counter to Teuton policies. Her war with Turkey had strained relations with Berlin and Vienna. After the Balkan wars she came into collision with Austria-Hungary over Albania.

The provisions of the Triple Alliance convention did not tie Italy fast to her two Teuton associates. Strangely enough they actually brought her into conflict with them. The compact was defensive in character. It bound each signatory to go to the aid of either of the others, if "without direct provocation on its part" it "should be attacked by another power." But neither Austria-Hungary nor Germany was attacked by another power. Vienna declared war on Serbia. Germany declared war on Russia and France. So Italy was released mechanically from any obligation, except to preserve "a benevolent neutrality."

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But there were other entangling provisions. The Triple Alliance compact dealt with the possibility of a change of the *status quo* in the Balkans, or in the Turkish possessions in Europe, occasioned by a war in which either Italy or Austria-Hungary should become engaged. It stipulated that temporary or permanent occupation of Balkan or Turkish territory should occur only after previous agreement between the two Powers and should be accompanied by compensation to the non-belligerent ally. Since Austria-Hungary had twice invaded Serbia and had made no propositions to Italy regarding compensation in case of a temporary or permanent occupation of that country, the Italian Government began, in December, 1914, to press for concessions, in harmony with the treaty provisions.

Italy first occupied Avlona on her own motion. Then she demanded cessions which would restore to her portions of the Italian Irredenta in Trentino and Istria and would help to rectify her northern frontier.

Austria-Hungary met these demands in part. There was never any probability that she would meet them in full. So Italy gradually drifted into a position in which her national policy compelled her to break relations with Austria-Hungary and to seek to satisfy her territorial aspirations through war.

The Entente powers needed Italy's help and were will-

ing to pay a price for it. The new treaties of alliance which she signed on entering the war, fully recognized her claims to a defensive northern frontier and also gave her a free hand on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. But the circumstances of her quarrel with Austria-Hungary and the terms of her adhesion to the Entente both inevitably circumscribed her participation in the war. Her rôle was that of a limited partner. Her thoughts were centred on the liberation of the Italian areas still under the Austrian yoke. She wanted to take title to them through the sword, rather than await the possibly dubious verdict of a peace conference.

So the Italian armies were committed to an offensive on perhaps the most unpromising front in Europe. Results achieved there could not correspond to the effort expended, for nature was an enemy more difficult to overcome than the Hapsburg legions.

Moreover the Italian operations, owing to the limitations of the terrain, could not be co-ordinated helpfully with other Entente operations. The Italian enterprise was bound to be an independent and isolated one. It could not be linked up with any schemes of Allied grand strategy, in so far as any such schemes could be considered existent. Italy could contribute to the Entente a reinforcement of from three million to four million men. But this reinforcement could

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never be put to a really telling use, because of the lack of Allied unity of command. Italy's political aims and her military policy (both entirely justifiable from her own point-of-view) operated to aggravate the unfortunate dispersion of Allied resources.

The Italian campaign opened, however, with high hopes. General Cadorna concentrated his forces in Venetia and began an offensive with Trieste as its objective. In a week the Italian armies were on the line of the Isonzo River, the first barrier of the Austrian strategic frontier. They crossed the river above Tolmino and stormed Monte Nero. Tolmino was also taken, and below Gorizia, Monfalcone and Gradisca were captured early in June. But the bridgehead opposite Gorizia held out. It was not forced until August, 1916.

On the other fronts, which were even more difficult, operations in 1915 were confined chiefly to strengthening the defensive positions of the Italian armies. In the Adige Valley the Italians pushed north toward the city of Trent, reaching Rovereto. Toward the eastern end of the Val Sugana they reached Borgo. Only so long as they could hold fast there, and on the Upper Brenta and Piave fronts, was Cadorna safe in developing his offensive toward Laibach and Trieste.

The Isonzo operation came nearly to a standstill after July, 1915. Many months of patient preparation



in the way of road building, blasting, levelling, and tunnelling were required in order to make the Gorizia bridgehead ripe for storming. Even before these preparations were completed, the Austrian High Command demonstrated the inherent weakness of the whole Italian position by striking a sudden blow in the West. In April, 1915, while the Germans were still battering away at Verdun, Field Marshal Conrad Hoetzendorff concentrated an army of 300,000 to 350,000 men in Southern Tyrol. He borrowed some German 17-inch howitzers of the heaviest type to supplement his own 12-inch Skodas and massed about 750 heavy and 1600 lighter guns on a thirty mile front from Rovereto to Borgo. The Italians were completely outclassed in artillery. Their positions were poorly consolidated and they had always to struggle against the momentum of a down-hill attack.

Hoetzendorff's assault began on May 14th. It was heaviest in the centre, converging in the direction of the towns of Arsiero and Asiago, both about eight miles inside the Italian border. The Italian front covering Arsiero was badly broken. By the end of May the Austro-Hungarians had reached their two immediate objectives and stood only ten miles from the edge of the Venetian Plain. Vicenza, the key to the plain, was only twenty miles away.

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The vice of the Italian situation was this. The armies on the Isonzo—constituting the bulk of the forces in the field—were fighting at the eastern end of a long corridor. Their main line of communication ran back across the Northern Plain from Udine to Treviso, to Vicenza, to Verona, to Brescia, and thence to Milan. But this line was exposed, all the way to Verona, to attacks coming out of the mountains, from ten to fifteen miles away.

Had Hoetzendorff been able to carry his offensive to Vicenza, he would have cut the connections of the Isonzo armies with their main base—Milan. They would have been compelled to retreat in haste out of Venetia, not stopping at the Piave, as they did after Caporetto, but keeping on to the Adige, thus abandoning the city of Venice, and practically all Venetia, to the enemy. Such a reverse would have come near putting Italy out of the war.

But the Austrian armies didn't reach the plain. Russia came to Italy's rescue. The Brusiloff offensive of 1916 was launched ahead of schedule and Austrian disasters in Volhynia and the Bukowina forced Hoetzendorff to transfer his reserve divisions to the Eastern Front. This was the single instance of really effective military concert between the Western Powers and Russia. Italy benefited by it. But, on the other hand,

it deranged the strategy of the Allied eastern campaign of 1916, depriving Rumania, three months later, of the support she expected from Russia and leaving her an easy prey to Falkenhayn and Mackensen.

The Austrian attack had been partially stopped in the sector south of Rovereto, before Brusiloff's offensive began. It died away after Hoetzendorff's attack on the Sette Comuni Plateau, south of Asiago, failed. The Austrian armies, depleted by transfers to Galicia, now assumed the defensive. They retired to Rovereto, under Italian pressure; evacuated Arsiero and Asiago and occupied strong positions just inside the Italian frontier. There, they remained until the Teuton offensive of November, 1917, although some half-hearted attempts to retake the Asiago Plateau were made by them in May of that year.

For the Italians, the Trentino front remained impassable until the last week of the war. Cadorna had no option but to turn again—in July, 1916—to the Isonzo front. On August 4th he stormed the heights on the west bank of the river, covering Gorizia. The Austro-Hungarians evacuated the city, King Victor Emmanuel entering it on August 9th.

But the capture of Gorizia left the Italian task practically as difficult as ever. To the north-east, guarding the road to Laibach, lay the Bainsizza Plateau,

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a natural fortress, and to the south-east, protecting Trieste, lay the Carso, even more impregnable. Of the Carso, against which Italian attacks were to beat ineffectually for more than two years, Professor Douglas W. Johnson, of Columbia University, says in his *Topography and Strategy in the War*:

It is not easy, adequately to conceive the stupendous difficulties of the Carso terrain. The plateau is a flat-topped mountain from four to six miles broad. Its sides are precipitous and as it rises from three or four hundred to more than a thousand feet above the surrounding lowlands, it constitutes a gigantic rock-walled castle, whose guns control with ease the city of Gorizia, the crossings of the Isonzo, and the two pathways to Trieste. . . . Like other Karstlands, the surface is excessively irregular, pitted with sink-holes without number and undermined by subterranean caverns. The sink-holes end in passageways connecting with the vast labyrinth of underground caves and galleries. Nature thus provided ready to hand innumerable concealed sites for heavy artillery, machine gun emplacements, observation stations, and secure underground retreats for vast numbers of troops. And what nature offered the Austrians had accepted and improved by long years of elaborate fortification. Trenches had been cut in the solid rock, elaborate systems of galleries and tunnels had been excavated, gun emplacements had been prepared in pits quarried for the purpose, and the whole system connected by covered communication trenches and supplied by water

pumped up to the thirsty surface and distributed by pipe lines.

Cadorna succeeded in getting a foothold on this forbidding fortress, storming the western rim in August, and enlarging his gains in September. About forty thousand Austro-Hungarian prisoners were taken between August 6th and November 4, 1916. But the cost of this effort was disproportionate to the strategic result. Trieste remained secure and the Austrian High Command was able to maintain the Isonzo lines with forces greatly inferior to those employed by Italy. The Italian military effort was unprofitably localized.

Italian strategy was not modified in 1917. It couldn't well be modified, so long as Trieste and the Istrian Irredenta remained its objectives. Cadorna's spring offensive was delayed by unfavourable weather. It began on May 12th with an artillery attack on the whole Isonzo front. The infantry now got a lodgment on the south-western edge of the Bainsizza Plateau, capturing Monte Cucco and the lower slopes of Monte Santo. In this direction, Cadorna was trying to penetrate the Chiapovano Valley, which separates the main portion of the Bainsizza Plateau from the southern section, known as the Ternovane.

South of Gorizia an assault was made on May 23d and the days following on the Carso, particularly on

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the lower edge fronting the sea. Here the Italians captured seventeen thousand prisoners and pushed their lines to within eleven miles of Trieste. Then the Austro-Hungarians counter-attacked and recovered part of the ground lost.

Another major effort was made in August. The Second Army, under General Capello, crossed the Upper Isonzo and effected a lodgment on the northern edge of Bainsizza. Its right wing at the same time enveloped the Austrian positions on the south-western edge and the enemy withdrew to the eastern side of the plateau. Nearer Gorizia the Italians took Monte San Gabriele and Monte San Daniele, commanding the Ternovane Plateau. The Third Army, under the Duke of Aosta, renewed the attack on Monte Hermada, which barred the coast route to Trieste. No material progress was made in that direction. The only serious dent in the Austro-Hungarian defence was that in the Bainsizza Plateau sector. But the deeper the Italians got into the mountains east of Gorizia, the more exposed they were to a flanking operation coming through the passes to the north-west.

Cadorna was over-sanguine. He had in mind always Laibach and a victorious march like Napoleon the First's, through the Julian Alps toward Vienna. There were many Italian strategists who insisted that that

was the true Allied highway into the heart of the enemy's country. Cadorna had not carefully studied German General Staff psychology. Nor had he anticipated the military consequences of Russia's withdrawal from the war. Italy's position in the fall of 1917, in fact, presented an ominous parallel to Serbia's position in the fall of 1915 and Rumania's position in the fall of 1916.

Italy's best armies had been tied up for two years in the Isonzo venture. They had just finished their second 1917 offensive. The line guarding their flank was entrusted to less dependable troops. Against those troops, Ludendorff was about to launch a veteran German army, brought from the Dvina front, supplemented by first line Austro-Hungarian divisions recalled from Galicia and the Carpathians. To General Otto Below was given the rôle which had been entrusted to Mackensen in Serbia and Rumania.

The German plan was simplicity itself. Below's Fourteenth German Army was collected about the headwaters of the Tagliamento and the Isonzo, screened from enemy observation. It was to overwhelm the weak Italian line, holding the southernmost ridges of the Julian Alps and then burst down into the Italian Plain toward Cividale and Udine—far in the rear of the Italian armies to the east of the lower Isonzo.

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The offensive was set for October 24th. It came as a nearly complete surprise. Even if it hadn't been a surprise, the Italian line could hardly have held. As it was, the German gas attacks and heavy artillery fire demoralized the Italian defenders, and the infantry had little difficulty in breaking through both at and above Tolmino and still further north-west, at Caporetto, whence the Natisone River Valley runs south to Cividale and Udine. Cividale was taken on October 28th; Udine, the headquarters of the Italian General Staff and the chief base of the Isonzo armies, fell on October 30th.

The Second and Third Italian armies were now threatened with envelopment. They fled west toward the lower Tagliamento. The break-through at Caporetto also compromised the Fourth Army, holding the line of the Carnic Alps in the upper reaches of the Piave River. It was compelled to retreat in even greater disorder than the Isonzo forces, for the roads out of the mountains were few and bad.

The first rallying line was the Tagliamento. The Italians lost 180,000 prisoners and 1500 guns before they halted there. But the Tagliamento line could easily be turned from the north. So the retreat continued to the Livenza and then to the Piave. This last named river furnished a barrier across the Vene-



tian Plain, from the sea to the foothills of the Alps, whence the line of defence was prolonged west to form a junction with the armies in the Brenta and Adige sectors. In those sectors the Italians had retired toward the precarious positions which they had held at the close of the Austrian offensive of 1916.

By the middle of November Italy's military power seemed on the point of breaking. The great retreat had cost in all 250,000 prisoners and 2300 guns. The losses in killed and wounded were probably 150,000 more. French and British divisions had to be sent from France to stiffen the new Piave line. Italy was humiliated and chagrined. The Allied publics were despondent.

General Cadorna officially attributed the disaster at Caporetto to the bad conduct of the left wing of the Second Army. He said in a bulletin issued on October 28th:

Lack of resistance on the part of a portion of the Second Army, which surrendered either disloyally or shamefully, allowed the Austro-German forces to break through the left wing of the Italian front. The praiseworthy efforts of other troops could not prevent the enemy from violating our sacred soil.

There were many wild rumours of disaffection and defeatist propaganda, of cowardice, and incompetency

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on the part of both men and officers. But there is little reason to think that Below's victory was due to Italian collusion. It was a clear-cut military operation, bold in design and executed with admirable precision. Probably no other body of Italian troops equal in numbers would have succeeded in holding the exposed line which a part of the Second Army failed to hold. In March, 1919, General Rosso, one of the commanders on the Caporetto front, was tried by court-martial and acquitted of charges of negligence and misconduct in the face of the enemy.

The Caporetto disaster was, speaking broadly, the natural consequence of Italy's hopelessly exposed position. Below merely did what Hoetzendorff came so near doing the year before. Italian defeat was also a consequence of Allied disunity of command. Had there been but one Allied front in Europe—or even in Western Europe—and unified control on that front, Italy would never have prolonged her unavailing offensive against Trieste and Laibach. She would have retained ample forces to defend herself on her northern border and at the same time would have contributed her surplus divisions to some joint Allied effort in a more promising field—for instance, to the Salonica offensive of 1916, which was intended to reach Sofia and the Danube, but only got as far as Monastir.

Caporetto was one more demonstration of the folly of Allied go-as-you-please generalship. It led to the Rapallo conference of Allied Premiers, which voted for unity of control but did nothing more effective than appoint an inter-Allied General Staff. In a speech in Paris, on November 12, 1917, discussing the Rapallo meeting, Premier Lloyd George said:

The Italian disaster necessitated action without delay to repair it. It is true that we sent troops to Salonica to succour Serbia, but, as always, they were sent too late. Half the men who fell in the vain effort to pierce the Western Front in September that same year, would have saved Serbia, saved the Balkans, and completed the blockade of Germany. 1915 was the year of the Serbian tragedy; 1916 was the year of the Rumanian tragedy, which was a repetition of the Serbian story, almost without change. National and professional traditions, questions of prestige and susceptibilities, all conspired to render our best decisions vain. The war has been prolonged by particularism. It will be shortened by solidarity.

Yet particularism was not overcome even by the Caporetto tragedy. Powerful influences in Great Britain still stood out for divided military control. Even British civilians were distrustful of it. William II had said in a speech on December 22, 1917: "With a centralized direction the German army works in a

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centralized manner.” He was probably thinking of all the armies of the Teutonic alliance, as constituting a single German army. And his remark emphasized the enormous superiority in that respect of German military policy over Allied military policy. It is significant of the obtuseness of English opinion on this point, even as late as the winter of 1918, that *The National Review*, for January of that year, should have resented the Kaiser’s matter-of-fact statement as “a hint to the Allies to make the mistake of putting a *Generalissimo* over their armies, which would provoke friction, as our circumstances are so different from those of the enemy, in whose councils only one Power counts.” It took still another great disaster—the British defeat before St. Quentin—to wring British consent to unified command under General Foch.

General Cadorna was relieved from the command of the Italian armies about the middle of November, General Diaz taking his place. The new chief’s problem was to hold fast on the new Piave line. He was able to check the enemy on the lower Piave. But in the mountain reaches between the Piave and the Brenta the Italians were many times in desperate straits. Open weather favoured the invaders. Their attacks continued through November and up to De-

cember 30th. By that time they had taken thirty thousand more prisoners and had pushed south to within four miles of the Venetian Plain. French and British divisions, put in on this front, restored the situation to some extent. Then a belated winter intervened to save the Piave line.

During the winter months Below's Fourteenth German Army was shifted to France. The Italian armies were strengthened and resupplied with artillery. Notwithstanding their favourable position the Austro-Hungarians were reluctant to resume the attack in the spring of 1918. They preferred to await the result of Ludendorff's offensive in France. Finally Germany demanded action, and on June 15, 1918, Boroevic, who had succeeded Hoetzendorff as Austro-Hungarian Commander-in-Chief, attacked on the entire front—from the Adige to the Adriatic. The Italian mountain line held firm. The Piave River was crossed at many points. But after a week of fighting, the Austro-Hungarian attack exhausted itself. The western bank of the Piave was re-cleared of the enemy and it was evident that Austria's force was spent. Italy had saved her last frontier. All she had to do was to stick it out there and wait for the end.

The final Italian offensive, begun on October 24th, found the enemy disheartened and clamorous for an

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armistice. Before this was granted the Italian armies had swept back victoriously past the Livenza to the Tagliamento and overrun the Venetian Alps as far as Feltre and Belluno. Immense stores, five hundred thousand prisoners, and five thousand guns were captured. The Caporetto disaster was avenged.

But the war ended with the bulk of the Italian forces still in Italian territory. The limitations imposed by nature on Italian military activities had not been overcome. The mountain barriers which obstructed egress from the peninsula were never broken. So the problem of an Italian offensive against Austria remained unsolved, despite two years of heroic effort on the Isonzo. Fighting her own battle, Italy showed a high degree of skill and courage and submitted to enormous sacrifices. But her contribution to the military power of the Entente (owing to her fatal lack of a true military frontier and to the inability of the Entente nations to co-ordinate their strategy) did not correspond to her actual resources or meet the expectations aroused by her entry into the war. This was regrettable. But the fault was not Italy's. It lay at the door of all the Entente governments, which, up nearly to the end, put the wisdom of the politician ahead of the wisdom of the soldier, and refused to

recognize the fact that neither a league of nations, nor an international war college, nor an Allied war staff, is competent to conduct an inexorably unified and centralized enterprise like war.

## CHAPTER XIX

### LUDENDORFF'S GAMBLE

GERMANY closed the year 1917 with an imposing military victory. She opened the year 1918 with an amazing diplomatic *coup*. Italy had almost suffered the fate of Serbia and Rumania. Now Russia, without a whimper, consented to dismemberment. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed by the Kaiser's Bolshevik confederates, Lenine and Trotzky, was in a way a consequence of the Russian military collapse, which had begun even before the Revolution. But it threw into Germany's lap spoils which she would hardly have dreamed of demanding from any Muscovite régime which still believed in Russia's future as a nation. Lenine and Trotzky were not Russians in any legitimate sense. They were not even Slavs. They were Marxian fanatics, to whom all nationalistic ideals were odious. From their point-of-view, the preservation of the integrity of the old Romanoff Empire was a matter of absolute indifference.

At Brest-Litovsk the German diplomats gorged



themselves without compunction. They appropriated Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Lithuania, Poland, and the Ukraine. They gave Turkey three Trans-Caucasian districts—Kars, Batum, and Erivan. They practically annexed Rumania, which was compelled to capitulate when Russia did. But not content with the largess of the Russian and Rumanian conventions, Germany proceeded to extend her Eastern holdings without treaty sanction. She seized the Crimea, occupied the north shore of the Black Sea as far as Rostov-on-the-Don, and converted both the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov into German lakes. She forced the Bolshevik leaders to cede Carelia to Finland and permitted the Turks to push across Trans-Caucasia to the Caspian and lay claim to the port and district of Baku.

In February and March, 1918, the most spacious Pan-German visions of a Middle Europe linked up with a Middle Asia, were on the verge of realization. The only obstacle to complete realization was the necessity of first terminating the war in the West. On that front Germany had wilfully complicated the situation by dragging in the United States. Ludendorff was now able to add one million men, drawn from the Eastern Front, to the German western armies. That reinforcement would, doubtless, have enabled him, standing on the defensive, to wear down France

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and Great Britain, fighting disjointedly and unaided. It might even have enabled him, taking the offensive, to defeat France and Great Britain, especially since, for the moment, Italy had become a liability to the Entente, instead of an asset.

But now, the unrestricted U-boat campaign having failed, the American military contribution had to be reckoned with. Germany's fight became a fight against the hour glass. The German problem was, to choose between the offensive and the defensive. Should Ludendorff husband his strength in order to repel a united Allied attack, coming in the fall of 1918 or the spring of 1919, meanwhile attempting to develop the reserve man-power of the new Eastern dependencies? Or should he try to put France and Great Britain out before the American armies could arrive?

Ludendorff was the final arbiter at German Grand Headquarters. In a speech at Weimar, in March, 1919, Philip Scheidemann, Premier of the Provisional Government, denounced the Grand Quartermaster General, as a "gambler" or "plunger" (the word he used was a borrowed one, *hasardeur*). This characterization fitted the facts. Ludendorff had the speculative instinct. He was willing to stake everything on a single throw. He is said to have had something like an altercation with the Kaiser over the comparative

merits of his own venturesome policy, and the cautious delaying policy which had underlain Hindenburg's strategy in the West, and to have closed it with the declaration: "I am a simple soldier, Sire, and my sole purpose is to end the war." He did end it—and much sooner than anybody expected.

Ludendorff made no secret of his decision to attack in the spring. On the contrary, his intentions were freely advertised. The Allies had ample warning of what was coming. In a way they may be said to have anticipated Ludendorff's decision. For Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig testifies in his report of October 21, 1918, that early in December, 1917 (that is, only a few days after the close of the battle of Cambrai), "orders were issued having for their object an immediate preparation to meet a strong and sustained hostile offensive; in other words, a defensive policy was adopted and all the necessary arrangements, consequent thereon, were put in hand with the least possible delay."

This statement holds good so far as concerns the attitude and intentions of the British High Command in France. But its control of British resources was limited. It would be extravagant to assume that the British Government had fully realized the possibilities of a German offensive, or had committed itself to the military arrangements consequent on such a realiza-

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tion. Late in the winter Bonar Law said publicly: "I am sceptical of the great German offensive." And many of the British generals in France shared his belief. Philip Gibbs, the British war correspondent, reports that shortly before the German offensive began he talked with thirteen of the division commanders on the St. Quentin front. Only two of them thought it would materialize. The others said: "It is all bluff."

In November, 1917, Premier Lloyd George had said in his Paris speech: "The war has been prolonged by particularism; it will be shortened by solidarity." Yet the old particularism was still allowed to stand in the way of unified Allied preparation for the coming German onslaught.

Ludendorff's great initial success west of St. Quentin was due in large measure to the shortcomings of the Allied system of dual military control. The French evidently expected the first German attack to be aimed at Paris, instead of Amiens. They thought that it would come in the Rheims sector and concentrated their reserves on that part of the battle line. Early in the fall of 1917 the French Government began negotiations with the British Government for an extension of the British front in France from St. Quentin down to the Oise River in front of La Fère. This extension was agreed to and was to take effect in December. It

was delayed, however, and was not completed until the end of January, 1918.

The British line had been prolonged twenty-eight miles. But the British armies in France, whose losses in 1917 had amounted to seven hundred thousand, had not been adequately reinforced. Charges to that effect were made in the spring of 1918, by leading British military critics. The fact that the expeditionary divisions were reorganized in the winter of 1917-'18 and cut down from thirteen battalions to ten battalions apiece—a change obviously embarrassing to the commanders in the field—indicates that the flow of replacements to the front had sensibly decreased. Three divisions had been sent to Italy. The British were, therefore, hardly strong enough to risk lengthening their line.

The Fifth Army, under General Sir H. de la P. Gough, was assigned to the twenty-eight-mile front taken over from the French. In addition, it held fourteen miles of the old British line up to Gouzeaucourt. To guard this long stretch it had only fourteen infantry and three cavalry divisions, the three cavalry and three infantry divisions being held in reserve. Only one division was allowed to 6750 yards of front. On three quarters of the line the troops were new to their positions. Three defensive belts were constructed, but

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not finished in all details. A strong bridgehead on the east bank of the Somme, covering Péronne, had been only partially completed when the German onslaught came. The state of the defence was, therefore, far from reassuring, in view of the enormous superiority in numbers which the attack was certain to develop.

The British Third Army, under General Sir G. H. G. Byng, was stationed on the left of the Fifth. It held a much shorter line, with eight divisions in the front and seven in reserve. The length of front allotted to each division was 4700 yards. The proportion of reserves was twice as great as it was on the front held by the Fifth Army.

The Fifth Army front presented a singularly easy mark to the enemy. Yet the shortage of troops there was not based on a mistaken theory that the German blow would fall elsewhere. It was not simply a case of trusting to Providence. Field Marshal Haig was much more willing to lose ground in the south—if ground had to be lost anywhere—than on the Flanders and Lens-Arras fronts. He had fought all through 1917 to improve his positions before Arras and in the Ypres sector. There the Germans were much nearer to important British bases and lines of communication. In the south, however, they stood on ground which had been abandoned by the enemy in the Hindenburg

retreat and which had been converted into a desolate waste. From a military point-of-view this territory was in itself comparatively valueless. Expulsion from the eastern part of it could not have alarming consequences, provided the German advance was held up at the line of the Somme.

The British had now adopted the German zone system of defence. Cambrai had demonstrated that an attack in great force could penetrate the first and second positions, and might easily drive clear through the defensive zone. The British General Staff had worked out a formula, according to which the penetration of a successful attack would probably equal half the length of the front attacked on. But this formula presumed a normal inflow of reserves, which would stabilize the defence within three or four days.

Byng's new style of attack at Cambrai was also elaborated by the Germans. They grafted on it features of a method devised by General Hutier and used with success in the East in the campaign against Riga. One of these features was an amplification of the wave system, by which relieving divisions passed through divisions which had carried the attack up to a certain point. Thus the wearied defence was continually confronted by fresh assault troops and the impetus of the forward movement was evenly main-

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tained. Special formations were also employed to rush up the lighter weight field guns.

This form of attack presumes a marked superiority in numbers. But it is always the privilege of the offensive to attain such superiority locally. In the St. Quentin offensive the Germans exploited to the limit the advantages of numerical superiority. On a front of fifty-four miles they used, on March 21st alone, a total of sixty-four divisions. To oppose these the Fifth and Third armies had only thirty-two divisions. As the battle spread north, nine more German divisions and five more British divisions became engaged. On the first day—March 21st—according to Field Marshal Haig's calculations, the German troops thrown into the battle exceeded the total strength of the British forces in France.

Fortune still smiled on German military ventures. Ludendorff had picked the weakest spot in the Allied line in the West for his first offensive. Long ahead he had selected March 21st for the opening of his attack. And that morning a dense fog came to his assistance. Until 1 P.M. it was impossible to see more than fifty yards in any direction and the enemy had little trouble in moving unobserved through the British forezone and up to the midzone battle positions. On the greater part of the line they were held there. But



on the night of March 21st the extreme British right, opposite La Fère, was forced to withdraw behind the Crozat Canal.

The first real break came on March 22d, west of St. Quentin. There the German waves penetrated the British battle positions and even the third defensive zone. The 50th and 20th divisions of the Fifth Army became separated. This necessitated a retreat to the Somme bridgehead, east of Péronne, and a drawing back of the southern divisions. The Fifth Army reserves were now exhausted. Rather than risk an engagement on the half-prepared Somme line, General Gough ordered a retirement to the west bank of the river. On March 23d contact between the Fifth and Third armies was broken for a time. German troops pushed through the gap and it was now evident that these two armies were unequal to the task of re-establishing a line west of the Somme, based on Bapaume, Chaulnes, and Roye.

The shortage of local reserves prevented that stiffening of the line which usually halts a wearied offensive. The Fifth Army was practically worn out. It lost sixty per cent. of its effectives during the retreat. The French were called on to take over the greatly extended Allied line, running west from La Fère to Noyon and Lassigny, and thence north-north-west past Montdidier

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toward Amiens. But the French reserves were still massed in the Rheims-Soissons sector. It took several days to move them around to the Amiens front. Field Marshal Haig drew heavily on the Second Army in Flanders and also borrowed some divisions from the First Army. But these also arrived gradually. For a while the only support in the rear of the Fifth Army was an improvised division, under General Carey, composed of stragglers, details, and technical troops, including American and Canadian engineers.

Under these circumstances a stabilization of the shattered front was impossible. To make matters worse the connection between the British and French forces west of the Somme was broken on March 26th. Nothing was left to the Allies but to continue their retreat, with the expectation of settling down in a new line somewhere to the west of Montdidier and in front of Amiens.

At this critical juncture—on March 26th—Foch was appointed generalissimo of the Allied forces. Ludendorff had forced this appointment. In that way he had helped to neutralize the victories which the German communiqués were jubilantly exploiting. According to German announcements, Ludendorff had already captured ninety thousand prisoners and thirteen hundred guns. But the achievement of Allied

unity of command was cheap at that price. Lack of it in the preceding four years had entailed losses alongside which those of the St. Quentin retreat were negligible.

By March 28th the Allied crisis had passed. In order to facilitate the operation against Amiens—the key to the communications' system linking the French front with the British front—Ludendorff was obliged to reduce the great northern bastion about Arras. He struck along the Scarpe Valley at the right of the British First Army, hoping to regain Vimy Ridge, lost in the battle of Arras the year before. The assault also extended well below Arras, where the British First Army had drawn back its lines several miles in order to conform with the retirement of the Third Army.

This German effort was stopped almost in its tracks. Its failure had a disconcerting effect on the enemy operations further south. For it tended to stop German progress east toward Amiens and to confine it to the region south of the Somme, where the liaison between the British and French forces was less gravely threatened. From March 28th to April 5th the Germans continued to make progress south-east of Amiens, getting beyond Moreuil, in the Avre Valley. But the French reserves had now come up and the offensive died away, with the Germans still about eight miles

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distant from their main objective. The greatest depth of the German penetration—due east from Moy, on the Oise, to Moreuil, was about thirty-seven miles.

Ludendorff's success was startling. In ten days he had recovered more than all the territory lost in the battle of the Somme and abandoned in the Hindenburg retreat. Though Amiens was not reached, it was brought under German fire and reduced to ruins. The ligature between the French and British armies was not severed, but it hung by a few threads. The Germans had only to drive down the Somme Valley to and beyond Amiens to put a broad, bridgeless estuary between the two Allied groups. Then, turning north, they would be able to roll up the British right flank in the narrow neck of territory between the Somme and the Channel coast. The loss of Amiens would have been a calamity to the Allies only second to the loss of Paris itself.

Yet the front before Amiens held firm. That was because the French reserves had now been shifted round toward the apex of the new Montdidier salient and were available for the defence of the Avre Valley—the easiest German line of approach to the Lower Somme. Having failed to make any progress there, and being unable to shake the British hold on Arras, Ludendorff now turned his attention to Flanders. If

the British armies could not be turned from the south, they might be turned from the north, by a break-through which would uncover Dunkirk and Calais.

The second Ludendorff offensive began on April 9th—on the 20-mile sector north from La Bassée to the point where the British line crossed the Comines Canal, south-east of Ypres. The initial intensity was greatest on the southern half of the line, below Armentières, where the Germans, driving north-west, reached the Lys and Lawe rivers within twenty-four hours—an average advance of about five miles.

Ludendorff had again selected a depleted front. Ten British divisions had been withdrawn from the Flanders battle line and sent south to check the Amiens drive. They had been replaced by divisions of the broken Fifth Army, filled up with drafts hurriedly drawn from camps in England. The British positions south of Armentières were held by two Portuguese divisions, which were to be relieved on April 10th—the day after the battle began.

Again fortune favoured the Germans. A dense fog, like that on the St. Quentin front on the morning of March 21st, facilitated the attack. The Portuguese, taken by surprise, were greatly hindered in their resistance. Their lines yielded and the enemy poured through toward Estaires. West of La Bassée the 55th

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British division stood fast, holding Givenchy and Festubert and covering the approaches to Béthune. But the gap farther north could not be closed by the few reserves in hand. On April 10th the Germans got across the Lys, both at Estaires and farther east, and also developed a strong attack in the Messines sector. Armentières was in danger of envelopment and had to be evacuated.

In the succeeding days the Germans broadened out their salient to the south-west and west, passing Merville and reaching the eastern edge of the Forest of Nieppe. In this direction the greatest German penetration was eight miles. Farther north, beyond Meteren, the maximum penetration was about twelve miles. These results were in harmony with the formula of a penetration equal to half the length of the front attacked on.

The Lys Valley offensive differed materially from the St. Quentin offensive in that there was no actual breakthrough, except on the first day and that, except on that day, there was no dislocation of the British commands. The retirement was gradual and when it slowed down the Germans found themselves in a flat valley country, commanded on the north and north-west by ridges and isolated hills.

Their main objectives were Hazebrouck and Ypres,

both protected by strong natural obstacles. Ludendorff elected to try first for Ypres, because the fall of that city would compel a British retirement from the big salient to the east of it which the British had fought all through the summer and fall of 1917 to create, and because through Poperinghe—eight miles west of Ypres—lay the road to Dunkirk. The aim of the Germans was to smash through the line of hills to the south-west of Ypres and take the city in the rear. This plan seemed on the point of succeeding at various times between April 12th and April 21st.

The British were fighting under a great strain. They were inferior in numbers and were hard pressed. Field Marshal Haig appealed to them in a proclamation—issued on April 12th—which almost struck a note of despair. He wrote: "Every position must be held to the last man. There must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each of us must fight to the end."

The painful impression made by this proclamation was heightened by the interview given out on April 17th by General Sir Frederick Maurice, British Director of Military Information, who, after comparing the situation to that at Waterloo, remarked:

It is unpleasant business standing the hammering; but so long as we can stand it the only question to

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be asked is: "What is happening to Blücher? What has become of the reserves?"

In spite of Haig's admonitions the British had to retire. They lost the Messines Ridge, Wytschaete, Neuve Église, Bailleul, Dranoutre, and Meteren. They had to abandon almost the entire salient east of Ypres. But the crisis passed by April 21st, when Blücher, in the shape of French reinforcements, had arrived. French troops took over Mount Kemmel and the line south-west of it as far as Meteren.

Mount Kemmel, it is true, was captured by the Germans on April 25th. But on April 29th Arnim's army, operating on the north side of the Lys Valley salient, attacked in force and was completely repulsed. After that it was never dangerous. On April 18th an equally unsuccessful general attack on the Béthune side had practically ended the German drive in that direction.

By the end of April, Ludendorff had succeeded in blasting two formidable salients into the Allied lines in France. But his real objectives—Amiens, Arras, Béthune, Hazebrouck, and Ypres—had not been attained. He had won striking victories. Yet his situation was, on the whole, less satisfactory than it had been on March 21st. On that date his armies slightly outnumbered those of the Allies. By April



30th, this superiority no longer existed. The St. Quentin disaster had spurred the British Government into sending reserves—too long withheld—to France. Some divisions were recalled from Palestine and the Balkans. More than three hundred thousand men were hurried across the Channel from England.

The American movement had also been vastly accelerated. Troops were crossing the Atlantic at the rate of two hundred thousand a month. Foch's strength was rapidly increasing. Ludendorff's was, at best, at a standstill. He began asking for Austrian reinforcements, but didn't get any until late in the summer.

The strain of the offensive was beginning to tell on Ludendorff. It took nearly a month to prepare his next blow. This also fell on a sector of the front where a good deal of ground could be lost by the Allies without compromising the military situation. The third German offensive was directed against the Ailette River-Chemin des Dames line, north of Soissons and Rheims—a line naturally strong, but at that moment weakly held. The French had stripped this sector in order to stiffen their defence of Paris and Amiens. Five British divisions had just been transferred there for a short period of rest, all of them having fought on the Somme in March and four of them having also fought in the Lys Valley in April. They held the front

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north-west of Rheims, three in the front line and two in reserve. On their left was the French Sixth Army.

The German break-through here was more rapid and completer than the break-through west of St. Quentin. The whole Allied line gave way. The drive began on May 27th. In five days the Germans had reached the Marne—thirty-one miles from their starting point.

No such progress could have been made if Foch had felt obliged to stop the German advance at any cost. He sent reserves into action slowly and sparingly, confining himself to holding Rheims, on the east, and to checking the development toward the west of the deep wedge which Ludendorff was thrusting down toward the old Marne battlefield. Soissons was lost, on May 29th. Château-Thierry was entered by the enemy, on June 1st. Thereafter German effort was concentrated on a widening out of the west side of the salient, running from a point on the Aisne, west of Soissons, south to Château-Thierry.

So long as Foch could keep his grip on the big re-entrant angle, projecting north of the Aisne toward the Oise, and containing the great forests which are the main north-eastern defence of Paris (Compiègne, Villers-Cotterets, Laigue, and Ourscamp), any German advance below the Marne would be distinctly hazardous.

So, in the first two weeks in June, Ludendorff sought persistently to reach the edges of Villers-Cotterets Forest and to infiltrate down the valley of the Ourcq River, thus clearing the way for a later operation around the southern edge of the forest region toward Paris.

In his first two offensives Ludendorff had successfully played the game which Foch was to play later at his expense. The St. Quentin and Lys Valley operations compelled an elaborate shifting and reshifting of Allied troops, thus greatly taxing the defence. Had Foch now re-transferred large bodies of French reserves from the Montdidier sector to the Marne sector, he would again have paid the toll of conforming his strategy to the enemy's and would also have inopportunistically weakened the vital Lassigny front, where the fourth German blow was soon to fall. He wisely preferred to let the Marne drive run its own course, calling on the American Expeditionary Army to check German progress at the south-western extremity of the new wedge—the point nearest to Paris.

Early in the spring of 1918 four American divisions—130,000 men—were ready for battle. On April 26th the First Division had gone into line in Picardy, distinguishing itself a month later by capturing Cantigny, in the Montdidier salient. The Second and

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Third divisions were sent early in June to the Château-Thierry sector, where they helped materially to stabilize the Allied line. The Second captured Bouresches, north-west of Château-Thierry, on June 6th, gaining more than two miles on a two and a half mile front. On June 10th it captured Belleau Wood, where the marines showed their mettle, defeating the Prussian Guard. The Third Division held the crossings of the Marne east from Château-Thierry to Jaulgonne.

Bouresches and Belleau Wood were the first real tests of the fighting quality of the American Expeditionary Force. The way the test was met ended all doubts as to the immediate availability of the American reinforcement. Foch now had an ample strategical reserve in sight, even for 1918, and could begin to plan a resumption of the offensive. With an offensive of his own in view, he could afford to observe with complacency the net result of Ludendorff's Aisne-Marne drive, which had created a quadrilateral pocket, twenty-five miles deep and twenty-five miles wide, very hard to hold and even harder to get out of.

His third offensive left Ludendorff in a position in which he was bound to attack again for the purpose of straightening his lines. The Allied re-entrant angle west of Soissons was the obstacle which he needed most to remove. Accordingly he launched from Las-

signy his fourth offensive, a logical extension and continuation of the third. It began on June 9th, on a front of about twenty miles from the Oise Valley, below Noyon, west toward Montdidier. Compiègne and the Oise crossings below that city were its objectives. For by taking Compiègne, the Allied re-entrant angle east of the Oise would be enveloped on the west, just as it had already been enveloped on the east by the drive past Soissons to the Marne. There was no surprise element in this attack. Foch was prepared for it and had devised new tactics to meet it.

The new method consisted in yielding the front line, after an outpost resistance, and meeting the Hutier waves further back, when they had begun to intermingle. The first experiment with the new French system was not a complete success. It did not attain the smoothness which was to be shown a month later against the fifth and last German offensive. But it held the enemy to a moderate advance down the valley of the little Matz River. The climax of the offensive was reached on the third day. But on that day the French counter-attacked with great energy, the enemy was thrown back on the left and in the centre and for all practical purposes the drive was smothered. Its maximum penetration was only about six miles.

The counter-attack of General Mangin's Tenth Army

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on June 11th marked, in fact, the beginning (then hardly perceptible) of the turn of the tide on the Western Front. It showed that Foch had the strength to return blow for blow. The long rest which the French armies had enjoyed, from the mid-summer of 1917 to the spring of 1918, had restored their edge and spirit. The French military establishment was at the height of its power. And it now had behind it the veteran British armies and a vast American reinforcement, ambitious, high-strung, eager to prove its worth in battle. With a little seasoning the Americans would equal the best European shock troops, as Foch and Pershing were about to prove.

The Hutier assault method was already showing wear and tear. Like every other German military conception it was ponderous and complicated. It had not gotten away from the old German theory of mass tactics. Its successful operation depended on a smooth co-ordination of many factors. Each wave had to spend itself and then allow the succeeding wave to pass over or through. But if one wave met an insuperable obstruction and came ebbing back, the whole operation fell into confusion.

The Hutier system had another grave drawback. It required long preparation and the elaborate training of specialty shock troops. There had to be trying

waits between offensives. Yet every hour's delay counted heavily against Ludendorff. Failing south of Lassigny, the German High Command took more than thirty days to stage the final western offensive. But Teuton policy required action somewhere. So Ludendorff compelled the reluctant Austro-Hungarian armies to strike at the Italians on a line from the mouth of the Piave River to the upper reaches of the Brenta and the Adige. This southern offensive began somewhat hopefully on June 15th, but collapsed within four days and ended in a decisive Teuton defeat. After the retreat across the Piave, Vienna and Budapest practically cut out of the war. There was no real fight left in the governments or armies of the Dual Monarchy.

Ludendorff, however, still cherished the illusion that he could win the war in France. He vastly underestimated Foch's resources. Because Paris was under the fire of the "Big Berthas" he thought that France would turn chicken-hearted. He was also grossly self-deceived about the value of the salient which he had created in the Aisne-Marne sector. He looked forward to opening it up to the east and south-east, taking Rheims, the great bastion of the Forest of the Mountain of Rheims, Épernay and Châlons-sur-Marne, thus severing a highly important line of communication

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between the Allied armies north-east of Paris and those on the Meuse and on the Lorraine border. He never dreamed that while he was trying to capture Rheims and Châlons, the exposed western face of the Aisne-Marne salient might be smashed in.

The fifth German offensive opened on July 15th. It was the culmination of Ludendorff's win-all-lose-all plunges. The ultimate *coup* remained uncompleted. While Ludendorff was in the act of casting the dice, Foch snatched the dice-box out of his hands.



## CHAPTER XX

### FOCH'S VICTORY OFFENSIVE

THE first four of the Ludendorff offensives stood out distinctly. They had a unity of character. They gathered, broke, culminated, and died away in the same ponderously mechanical manner. They left deep indentations on the Western battle front. Each of them seemed to carry the German High Command considerably nearer its twin objectives—possession of Paris and the capture of the Channel ports.

The fifth offensive differed from the others. In scope it was the most grandiose of all. The front attacked on was fifty-five miles long, five miles longer than that before St. Quentin or Laon, nearly twice as long as that before Lassigny and nearly three times as long as that before Lille. Masses of shock troops were thrown in lavishly. The latest adaptations and refinements of the Hutier assault method were also all in evidence.

But, as in the case of Boroevic's June offensive in Venetia, the energy of the attack was too much dissipated. For the first time the brunt of it did not fall in

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the middle of a straight line. No central breach was made into which there could be a flow of supports from the two wings. Nor was the offensive able to finish its course. After three days it was swallowed up by the Foch counter-offensive. It had nearly broken down on the second day. Instead of staging a climax, Ludendorff had staged an anti-climax. There were two reasons for this. By July 15, 1918, German offensive strategy had become bankrupt and the temporary superiority in man power, on which it was based, had ceased to exist.

Ludendorff's suppressed fifth offensive dovetailed perfectly into Foch's counter-offensive. This was not a pure coincidence. Having been balked in the attempt to work down the Oise Valley to Compiègne, the German High Command naturally turned next to the project of capturing Rheims, Châlons and Épernay and clearing the line of the Marne. It was relatively easy to foresee the direction from which the fifth German blow would be delivered.

Foch did foresee it. As a consequence he was ready to meet an attack everywhere on the long front from Château-Thierry up past Rheims, and then east of Rheims to Massiges. He was also ready to assume the offensive himself, if Ludendorff should attack elsewhere or hold off too long.

Ludendorff had little latitude in the choice of his new operating front. It is no reflection on his strategy that he made the choice which was the most obvious under the circumstances and which Foch had anticipated. But it is a reflection on the quality of his generalship that, absorbed in his own plans and undervaluing the initiative of his antagonist, he should have ignored the possibility of an Allied operation against the exposed west side of the Aisne-Marne salient.

This front was especially vulnerable because a concentration against it could easily be concealed. The big forest of Villers-Cotterets adjoined it on the west and further to the west lay the bigger forest of Compiègne. In the shelter of these coverts Foch had gathered together a force to be used, when opportunity should favour, for an attack on the German line from Soissons south to Château-Thierry.

Ludendorff was unaware of the existence of this concentration and did not in the least suspect Foch's intentions. Yet Foch gave him a certain warning. If he had been keenly observant he would have noted, and correctly interpreted, the numerous nibbling operations conducted by the French to the east and north-east of Villers-Cotterets Forest in the last two weeks in June and the first two weeks in July. Foch was continually advancing the French line, acquiring "elbow room"

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and seizing advantageous "jumping off" points for an attack. Meanwhile he had quietly transferred Mangin's Tenth Army from the Lassigny sector to the sector west of Soissons and reinforced it with the First and Second American divisions.

Foch knew that Ludendorff must strike again before August 1st or confess failure. So he bided his time. Ludendorff selected July 15th because July 14th was Bastille Day and there was a remote chance that the French might relax their vigilance a little while celebrating it. But the French information service had the attack scheduled to the hour. On the main front—east of Rheims, where there had been no serious fighting since the fall of 1915—General Gouraud drew back from his first line positions, soaked them with gas and took the advancing German waves under fire from battle positions a couple of miles back. There was no sign of even a moderate break-through, like that below Lassigny. The German assault was stopped in its tracks. Ludendorff had gone to the well once too often with the Hutier method.

The Allied defence of the loop which encircled Rheims was equally firm. Rheims, the city, was only a glorious memory. It could have been yielded under stress, as Soissons had been yielded at the end of May. The position of real value in this sector was the Forest

of the Mountain of Rheims—a few miles south—which not only dominated Rheims but barred the road toward Épernay. But Foch needed to hold fast on the whole eastern side of the Aisne-Marne quadrilateral in order to reap the full benefits of his breaking-through operation on the west side.

He could well afford, however, to encourage the Germans to cross to the south bank of the Marne between Château-Thierry and Dormans and also to deepen the Aisne-Marne pocket to the south-east in the direction of Épernay. Evidently he did accelerate German progress in those directions. On July 15th the enemy crossed the Marne in force and penetrated about four miles up the valley of the little Surmelin River, toward Condé. They held an irregular salient on the south bank for about five days. The French also readily yielded ground further east. There the Germans drove a wedge five or six miles deep, on both banks of the river, to the edge of the Forest of Épernay.

By July 18th the main German effort had been concentrated in the south-eastern corner of the Aisne-Marne salient—just where it suited Foch best to have it concentrated. So on the morning of that day the Franco-American attack on the Soissons-Château-Thierry side of the Marne quadrilateral was unleashed. It represented the first materialization of the Allied

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“strategic reserve.” Foch was popularly credited with having collected such a reserve even before he became *generalissimo*. But its existence, prior to June, 1918, was probably largely mythical. If Foch had possessed a real “strategic reserve” at the time of the German drive for Amiens, he would hardly have failed to employ it then, when it looked as if the liaison between the French and the British armies was about to be broken. At that time Ludendorff pooh-poohed Foch’s reserve. The mistake he made was in pooh-poohing it three months later, after one million American soldiers were on French soil and more than three hundred thousand—including the technical services—were ready for use at the Front.

Foch’s blow took Ludendorff absolutely by surprise. It was also like a bolt out of a clear sky to the Allied publics. They had hardly begun to recover from the enormous depression of the spring and early summer and still looked on an Allied resumption of the offensive as a remote contingency. The meaning of the operation was curiously misunderstood at first. Many military critics discussed it as a mere counter-attack, intended to relieve German pressure on the eastern and south-eastern parts of the Aisne-Marne salient.

But this was to misread Foch’s character. He had the aggressive temperament. He had persistently

lauded the offensive as the surest and most economical method of attaining military results. It was certain that he would return to it suddenly, dramatically, and at the earliest practicable moment. It seemed entirely clear to me when the first bulletins of the fighting came in, on the afternoon of July 18th, that in a few hours the whole character of the war on the Western Front had been transformed. I wrote on the evening of July 18th ("Military Comment," *New York Tribune*, July 19, 1918):

It is no longer a Ludendorff offensive. Foch has intervened. He has started an offensive of his own. He is attempting to snatch the initiative out of Ludendorff's hands. It looks now as if he had succeeded in doing so. . . . Foch's attack marks a revolutionary change of policy. It is the turning point in Allied strategy for 1918. The Allied armies in France no longer stand at bay. They have turned on the enemy. The vigour and confidence with which Foch interrupted his defence and struck at the Germans on a new field are evidence enough that he no longer feels under the necessity of husbanding his strength and of yielding territory in preference to involving his reserves too deeply in what might develop into a premature finish fight. . . .

The great significance of the Franco-American drive at the German right flank in the Aisne-Marne region lies, therefore, in the fact that it was a new departure. It was not a counter-attack. It was a counter-offensive.

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It turned out to be exactly that—the first of the series of blows under which the German armies in France and Belgium were to recoil, wilt, and finally be reduced to begging for an armistice. It was a notice to Ludendorff that he had lost his gamble. But Ludendorff closed his eyes and ears to the notice. Bred in the General Staff tradition of Prussian military infallibility, he refused to recognize that his offensive was over and that Germany's only hope of carrying the war to a draw lay in an immediate return to a wary and economical defensive.

His own pride of opinion revolted at such an admission and he was also able to excuse himself from making it on the ground that it would throw the German civilian population into a panic. He recalled his divisions from beyond the Marne after the first news of the Franco-American successes west of Soissons and north-west of Château-Thierry reached him. But he sought to camouflage to the Germans the sensational change which the military situation had undergone by unduly prolonging his stay in the Aisne-Marne salient, which it was now foolhardy for him to try to hold.

The shape of the salient was such that when the weak west side gave way all the rest became worthless for Ludendorff's purposes. An Allied advance north-west



from Château-Thierry to the Ourcq River and west from the Villers-Cotterets region to Fère-en-Tardenois would inevitably squeeze out the rest of the pocket. There would not be room left in it for free north-and-south communications and the fact that Ludendorff had overpacked it with troops and overstocked it with munitions and supplies for the drive toward Épernay, made a speeded-up evacuation all the more necessary.

Ludendorff lingered, however. He used up many divisions delaying the fall of Soissons and Fère-en-Tardenois. And this was done not so much for the sake of extricating German war material as it was to foster the illusion that the German retirement was a trifling strategic incident, purely voluntary and involving no change in German policy. So the Germans stopped longer than they should have stopped at the Ourcq, and on the "new lines" between the Ourcq and the Vesle, so conspicuously advertised as "permanent" in the German communiqués. They tried to hold the Vesle, instead of retreating outright to the Aisne and the Chemin des Dames. They did, in fact, hold the enclave between the Vesle and the Aisne for many weeks.

But all this was "window-dressing"—from the military point-of-view. After his right wing was broken on the Soissons-Château-Thierry front Ludendorff's first

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duty as a strategist was to draw his armies out of all the exposed salients in which he had planted them and to bring them back to the far shorter and safer Hindenburg Line. But this he was too self-willed and too petulant to do. He lacked the unsparing clarity of vision and intellectual candour of the really great soldier.

Ludendorff's besetting failure in the last four and a half months of the war was his inability to look at the facts squarely and without rancour. He continued to allow his military operations to be influenced by political considerations and personal interests. By so doing he greatly facilitated Foch's task. This was to push, squeeze, elbow, and shoulder the German armies out of France, disintegrating them in the process. His method of pressure was the reverse of Ludendorff's, the reverse of Falkenhayn's, the reverse of Joffre's. Foch didn't depend on ponderous, high-gearred offensives of the Hutier type. He didn't favour long repose between offensives. He maintained an operative front of one hundred, one hundred and fifty, or two hundred miles, whereas his predecessors had maintained operative fronts of fifteen, thirty, or fifty miles. He didn't blast and crunch his way forward over restricted areas as the Germans did at Verdun. Nor did he "nibble," as Joffre did in 1915, with minute territorial objectives and long intervals between the attacks. He preferred

to distribute his effort evenly and to make it practically continuous.

This new method was made practicable by the nearly complete return of the warfare of movement. It was also especially adapted to the strategic situation with which Foch had to deal. His objective was no longer primarily the recovery of French territory. It was the destruction of the German Army. To wear down that army, now seriously weakened and further handicapped by being thrown suddenly on the defensive, was his single purpose. An army in modern days is no stronger than its reserves. And the easiest way to exhaust the German reserves was by shifting and varying the attack, imposing on the enemy the constant burden of hurrying reinforcements from one sector to another. The Allies had felt the weight of this burden after the German drives from St. Quentin, from Lille, and from Laon. Now it was to become a nightmare to Ludendorff.

By August 8th the Aisne-Marne salient had been cleared up to and a little beyond the Vesle River. This left Ludendorff with three more salients on his hands—the big Montdidier one, the smaller Lys Valley one, and the still smaller one south of Lassigny. They all offered tempting marks to an Allied commander-in-chief. To stay in those salients until attacked at a disadvantage was military folly. But Ludendorff was ashamed to

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retire out of any of them—even though he had the assurance to say in exculpation of his ejection from the Marne salient: “We left the abandoned ground to the enemy according to our regular plan. ‘Gain of ground’ and ‘Marne’ are only catchwords, without importance for the issue of the war.”

Moreuil, Montdidier, the Lassigny Massif, Bailleul and Kemmel may also have been only “catchwords,” from the point-of-view of Ludendorff, the student of the art of war. But as a commander in the field he held on to them long after an abandonment “according to our regular plan” had become advisable.

Already in the last half of July Foch had undertaken some trying-out operations north of Montdidier which foreshadowed an offensive in that quarter. But the German High Command was again unobservant. The Franco-British attack south of the Somme broke on August 8th. A couple of days before that General Ardenne, one of the favoured elucidators of Grand Headquarters strategy, had written in the *Berliner Tageblatt*:

“The German offensive has suffered an unpleasant interruption, but it will certainly revive. And what will contribute to its revival is the fact that the armies between the Aisne and the Marne were able to carry on their operations with their own reserves, without being obliged to draw upon the other reserves, the

unrestricted possession of which secures the initiative to the German supreme Command."

Probably Ludendorff had likewise hypnotized himself into this complacent belief. He said in his book of reminiscences, written after the war, that he did not lose hope of military victory until after the collapse of the Montdidier salient. The offensive of August 8th caught his generals there asleep. The Allied forces on the first day made an advance of eight miles and a half, taking one hundred guns, and seven thousand prisoners. The German front lines simply melted away. Within four days the armies of Hutier and Marwitz—the victors of the battle of St. Quentin—had lost forty thousand prisoners and three hundred guns and were back on the rim of the old Noyon salient of 1914-1916.

Ludendorff now repeated the mistake he had made below the Aisne. He grew irritable and captious. He wanted to turn and strike back at Foch and he squandered many divisions in counter-attacks which had no strategical justification. Some of them may have been necessary to facilitate the extrication of troops and material. But this extrication ought to have been already under way long before August 8th.

Ludendorff finally elected to make a real stand on the old Noyon front instead of cutting losses and getting back to comparative safety behind the Hindenburg

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Line. This was the decisive error of his military policy. It entangled him helplessly in Foch's net.

The real German problem on the West Front after July 18th was this. The offensive was lost and there was practically no chance of recovering it. On what line then must the German defence crystallize? Hindenburg's foresight had given the Germans one incomparably strong position in France. It lay miles back of the fronts on which the tide of battle had turned against the Germans. There was ample time to rally behind it. Every military consideration favoured rallying behind it. Open warfare had reached the stage at which no line could be held rigidly and absolutely. The defending infantry could maintain itself only by being always equal to the demands of a counter-attack. So the soundest policy for a defence which hoped to stabilize itself was to occupy the strongest possible defensive zone available, to bring the troops into it unexhausted and confident, and to expend no effort in counter-attacks except that necessary in order to repair breaches in this primary line. It was easier for the Germans to hold fast in the Hindenburg positions than in any others. Why, then, take chances by holding fast in the others?

This problem and the great danger involved in Ludendorff's irascible and irresolute handling of it were set

forth fully in my "Military Comment" in the New York *Tribune*, while the Germans were still clinging to the Bray-Chaulnes-Roye-Noyon line. I quote from the *Tribune* of August 27, 1918:

When, on July 18th, Foch snatched the initiative out of Ludendorff's hands, the latter undoubtedly believed that the Allied offensive would be similarly broken and spasmodic (like his own). He counted on being able to get back easily to a fairly good defensive line and on being allowed to remain there in comparative tranquillity until he could adjust himself to the changed military situation. Hence, perhaps, his unreadiness to make a quick and economical retirement. He clung obstinately to the illusion that he could probably soon recover the offensive; and as a result he submitted to excessive losses in men and material trying to hold positions valuable for future offensive projects, but worthless and perilous to armies compelled to defend themselves.

Foch's aggressive strategy has not imitated Ludendorff's. It is not spasmodic, but smoothly continuous. It consists in exerting pressure along a very broad front and striking successively and rapidly at points where the defence seems to be flabbiest. Ludendorff ignored his opportunity to retire cheaply and in a more or less leisurely manner. Now Foch's strategy keeps him from retiring at all, except under conditions which involve great risks and heavy penalties. He is closely beset on the entire front from Arras to Rheims. If he yields too much at any point, his whole line is in jeopardy.

The Germans are paying again and again the

penalty of having grossly underestimated Foch's generalship and the fighting strength of the Allies. Ludendorff's whole western campaign went to wreck when he assumed that he could break the fighting spirit of the enemy before September. Now the fighting spirit of his own troops is failing and he is casting about anxiously for a defensive position on which he can hold the Allies until the winter season sets in.

Will that position be the famous Hindenburg Line? It may not be. And for this reason. With the system of non-rigid defence which is now followed, a line is only a line, whatever imposing name you may give it. The Hindenburg Line is merely a belt or a zone—not a stiff, impregnable barrier. No line can be held now except by troops which have the stamina, resolution, and numbers to mend it by counter-attacks when it is broken. It is a question not of trenches or natural obstructions, but of infantry of sufficient strength and quality.

When he got back to the Hindenburg Line in September, Ludendorff couldn't hold it—formidable as it was—because he had already sacrificed his best chance of holding it. He had lost two hundred thousand prisoners and twenty-five hundred guns on the way back. Division after division had been used up fruitlessly counter-attacking on the Ourcq, on the Ailette, at Noyon, at Lassigny, at Roye, at Chaulnes, at Bapaume, all of them of value only as "one-night-stand" positions in a retreat to the real German bastion in France.



The Quéant-Drocourt switch of the Hindenburg Line was smashed by the British First Army on September 2d. That was a sufficient portent of the fate of the rest of the line. The Quéant-Drocourt extension was completely broken through in a single day's fighting. The positions were no stronger than the infantry defending them. And Field Marshal Haig in his final report repeatedly notes the low morale of large sections of Ludendorff's army, broken and depressed by the slow and costly retirement from the forefront of the Albert-Montdidier salient to the shelter of the Hindenburg Line.

Ludendorff got settled in the Hindenburg positions about the middle of September. This was at least a month too late. He was fairly well established at the southern end of the line—that from Moy through La Fère, around the St. Gobain Forest and *via* the Chemin des Dames to the Aisne. There his retreat had never been seriously impeded. But on the vital Cambrai-St. Quentin front his situation was far from secure. He had not sufficient reserves in that sector to stop a really determined attack. And once the Hindenburg Line caved in anywhere between Cambrai and St. Quentin, Germany's grip on France and Belgium had been shaken loose.

Foch's strategy from September on was exceedingly

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simple. The German armies were spread from Flanders south-east to Alsace. They constituted two geographical groups, the northern based on Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne, the southern on Metz and Mayence. The Belgian Ardennes would intervene to separate them, should the northern group be driven back to the line of the Meuse in Belgium. Such a retirement would cost the northern group its lateral communications with the southern group—the railroads which come north from Mézières through Maubeuge to Valenciennes and Lille. The British armies were to break through the Hindenburg Line and advance to Maubeuge, thus isolating the Germans in Western Belgium. American and French divisions were to drive north from Verdun to Sedan, absolutely cutting the connection between the northern and southern German Armies. Then there would be no safety for the Germans anywhere west of the Rhine.

Ludendorff had not grasped the strategy of Foch's operation on the west side of the Aisne-Marne salient. Possibly he didn't now clearly grasp the strategy of the latter's great closing-in operation. He remained uncertain and bewildered. He again defended unessential portions of his line too long, instead of husbanding his strength for use in the critical sectors. Thus he held on to Laon after it had become as valueless as Noyon or Roye.

What he could not help having pressed home on him was that he needed always reserves and more reserves—and didn't have them. Foch had done him out of his surplus before the crisis of the war arrived. He evacuated the Lys Valley salient and stripped the Belgian front. Yet he never had enough spare divisions to throw in against the British opposite Cambrai and St. Quentin and the Americans and French in the Argonne sector.

The Hindenburg Line was completely broken in the last days of September and the first days of October. Then an advance into Belgium was made and Lille was evacuated. Laon fell and Ludendorff drew back on the Oise-Aisne front. The American offensive in the Meuse region began on September 26th and continued almost uninterruptedly until the armistice was signed.

Ludendorff was satisfied in October that he had lost the war. True to Prussian military instincts, he demanded that the German Civil Government sue for terms. Prince Max of Baden, the Imperial Chancellor, acted as Ludendorff's mouthpiece. And, in order to save the reputation of the General Staff, the plea for peace was represented as coming from the German public, which was said to be anxious to repudiate its false leaders and eager to turn to the ideals of freedom and democracy.

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The General Staff staged both the Kaiser's abdication and the German revolution. It was their way of falsifying the record. Ludendorff's apologists will doubtless say that he favoured an armistice because the German civilian population deserted him and a part of the army had become undependable and unruly.

But that tells only a small fraction of the truth. Ludendorff sought terms equivalent to surrender because he knew that he could neither keep the German armies in France and Belgium or get them back into Germany. It is admitted by the Germans themselves that toward the end of October the German armies were retreating toward the line of Antwerp-Brussels-Namur-Diedenhofen-Metz. In the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of January 26, 1919, Major Paulus, a German military critic, frankly acknowledged that when Ludendorff was forced to retire to an Antwerp-Brussels-Namur line, he was beaten and "finally beaten."

General Freytag-Loringhoven entered a mild disclaimer to this statement. But Freytag is an interested critic. What Major Paulus says is true. Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Palmer, Chief Censor of the American Army in France, reports that when Marshal Foch read the Berlin communiqué acknowledging that on November 1st the Americans had at last broken clear through the German lines in the Argonne sector and

were on the outskirts of Sedan, he allowed himself his first outburst of emotion since the opening of the Victory Offensive. Foch knew that with Sedan in his possession the German armies could not escape. Ludendorff knew so, too.

The German theory of a peace by accommodation, made in the absence of a military decision, may survive and be bolstered up by an apochryphal literature. But it is a mere subterfuge. Set against it the fact that the German General Staff accepted the penalties of defeat, while Germany was still in possession of tens of thousands of square miles of Allied territory, when her own soil was intact except for a tiny sliver of Alsace, and when at least three million of her soldiers stood on enemy soil. The German capitulation was unique in scope and circumstances. And the circumstances were more suggestive of a desire to escape punishment than they were of any penitent transformation in German politics and character.

The Allies ended the war victoriously in Palestine, in Mesopotamia, in Macedonia, in Venetia, and on the Western Front. It was a triumph of unified strategy—a swift and brilliant vindication of Foch's appointment as *generalissimo*. In less than seven months the Allies had accomplished more in a military sense than they had accomplished in the preceding forty-four months.

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There is a striking parallel between the closing period of the World War and the American Civil War. Up to the end of 1863 the North had made little effective use of its superior resources. Authority was dispersed. There was no centralization of command, no common plan of action for the eastern and western fronts. The President, the Secretary of War, the Major-General nominally commanding the armies from a desk in the Secretary of War's office, all interfered with the generals in the field. There was a multiplication of independent military departments. The war was conducted in accordance with the circuitous methods of civil government and politics. After many bitter lessons President Lincoln recognized the absurdity of this policy. He made Grant commander-in-chief and relieved him absolutely of the handicap of dictation from Washington. "The particulars of your plan I neither know nor seek to know," he wrote to Grant on April 30, 1864. "You are vigilant and self-reliant; and I am pleased with this. I wish not to obtrude any constraints or restraints on you."

"It was not until after both Gettysburg and Vicksburg," said General William T. Sherman, "that the war professionally began." The Allied Governments were even slower than Lincoln in learning one of the most obvious of military lessons. That was the great

tragedy of the war on their side. They conducted the struggle for nearly four years more or less unprofessionally. They had—at least after 1917—resources greatly superior to Germany's. But they had to conquer their own separatist tendencies before they could conquer the enemy.

Foch's strategy as *generalissimo* was almost without a flaw. After he arrived the laurels of the German commanders-in-chief faded. He was the "happy warrior" whom a great cause had long awaited. Modest, serene, imperturbable, cool in counsel and resolute in action, he rose brilliantly to every occasion which presented itself—at Morhange, at the Marne, in Flanders, in Artois, in the Victory Offensive.

"The war was won by faith," said Foch in a statement issued in March, 1919. So far as he contributed to win it—and his share was greater than any other man's—it was won by a superb combination of faith and genius.





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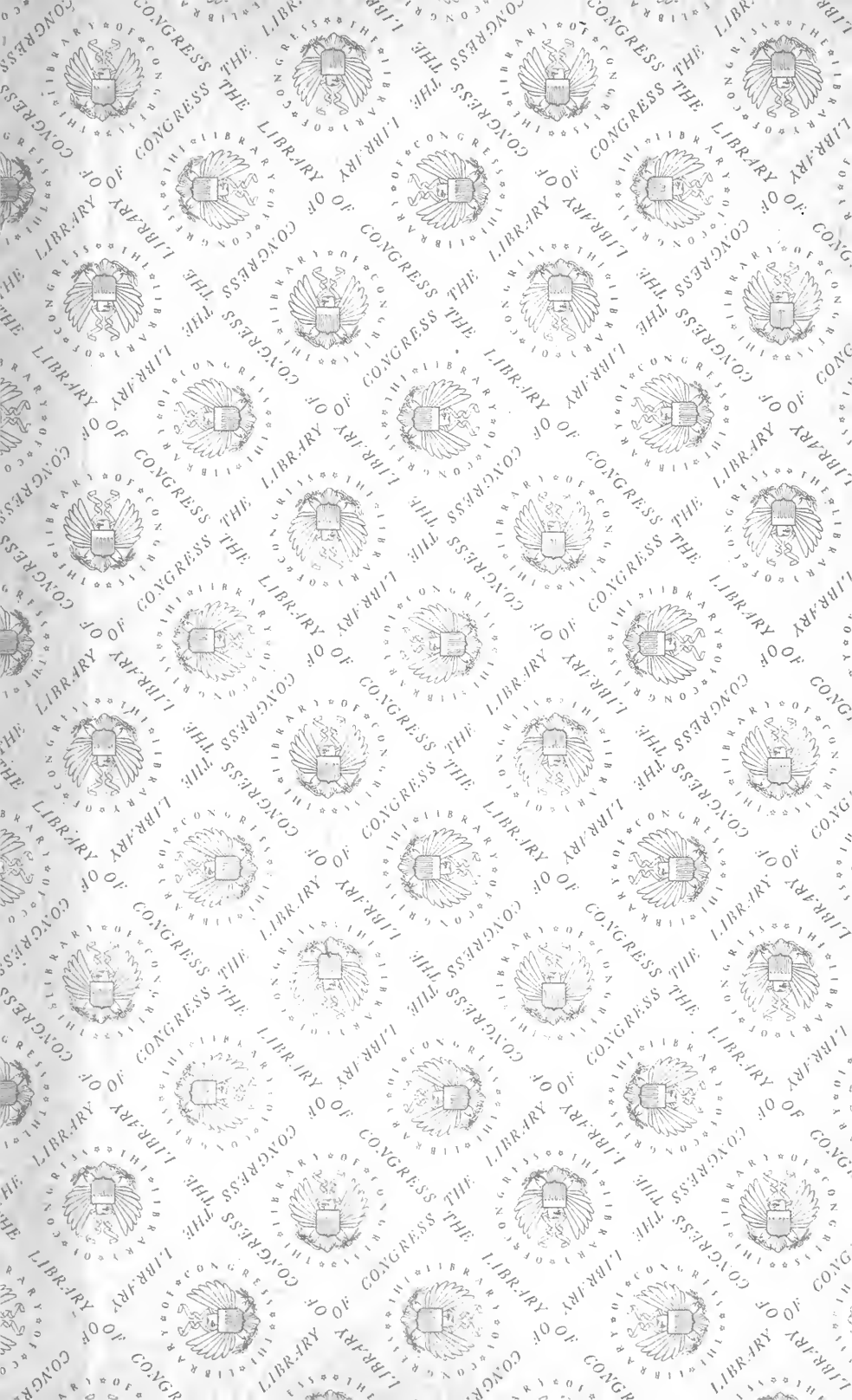




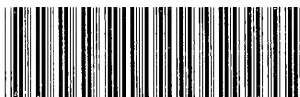
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